

MEMORANDUM

Subject of Memo: Update on Specimen Collection Material Services

Date: 03/30/26

To: Ontario Health Team Physician Leads

From: Samir Patel, Vice President and Chief, Microbiology and Laboratory Services, PHO

Dear Health System Partners,

I am writing to share an update on Public Health Ontario's (PHO) upcoming changes to specimen collection materials for clinical laboratory testing, and to thank you for the thoughtful feedback you have provided throughout this process.

PHO has been actively engaging with health system partners, including recent discussions with primary care leaders, to better understand the potential challenges associated with transitioning away from PHO-supplied specimen collection materials. We appreciate the feedback shared, particularly about added administrative work, costs to practices, possible impacts on patient testing, and the need for more time for primary care practices to establish alternative, sustainable supply arrangements.

In response to this feedback, and in recognition of the critical role primary care plays in delivering timely, high-quality patient care, PHO will extend the transition period for current primary care clients. **Specifically, PHO will advise existing primary care clients that they may continue to order specimen collection materials from PHO for an additional six-month transition period if they self-identify as experiencing challenges in securing alternative supply options.** This extension is intended to provide impacted practices with the time and flexibility needed to finalize and implement solutions, while avoiding any possible disruption to patient care. A [reference list](#) is available to help clients identify potential sources for materials that will no longer be provided directly by PHO.

What this Means for Current Primary Care Clients

Current primary care clients can continue to obtain specimen collection materials from PHO until September 30, 2026 if they have not yet been able to secure other supply options.

The process for order supplies from PHO remains the same. Complete all fields in the updated [Requisition for Specimen Containers and Supplies](#) and submit it to your nearest [PHO laboratory](#). *Please ensure you are using the most current version of the requisition form and bookmark the link so you can always access the latest version. Using an outdated form may result in delays in processing or cancellation of your order.*

Exempted Specimen Collection Materials

After September 30, 2026, PHO will continue to provide the following specialized testing kits to providers, including primary care offices.

- *Bordetella pertussis* kits
 - *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* NAAT kits
 - Gastric lavage kits (for hospital clients only)
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Changes Effective April 1, 2026

As previously communicated, PHO will proceed with discontinuing the direct provision of specimen collection supplies to hospitals and community laboratories, effective April 1, 2026.

Beyond April 1, 2026, PHO will continue to provide specimen collection supplies directly to the following groups and settings. These exemptions support outbreak response, remote communities, and specialized services.

- Public health units (including PHU-operated clinics)
 - Northern nursing stations
 - Correctional facilities
 - Indigenous-led clinics and health organizations (e.g., Indigenous Health Authorities and Indigenous-led elder care organizations)
 - Ontario Forensic Pathology Service
 - Long-term care and retirement homes with a suspected or confirmed outbreak
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Thank you again for your engagement, constructive input, and continued partnership. Your insights are invaluable as we work together to support a smooth transition.

If you have any questions about this update, please contact PHO's Laboratory Customer Service Centre:

- **Phone:** 1-877-604-4567 (Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m.; Saturday 8:00 a.m.–3:45 p.m.)
- **Email:** customerservicecentre@oahpp.ca

Sincerely,



Samir Patel
Vice President and Chief, Microbiology and Laboratory Services
Public Health Ontario