



# SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Testing Outline

February 9, 2021

## Diagnostic Testing for PHC Patients and Long-Term Care (LTC) Residents:

### **SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) nucleic acid amplification test (NAT or RT-PCR):**

- Detects the presence of viral RNA
- Highly sensitive test, can remain positive for months after initial infection in some cases
- **Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs** are the recommended specimen type
- Expected turnaround time is less than 24 hours after sample receipt in the laboratory

### **Rapid SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) NAT or RT-PCR test:**

- Approved for NP swabs only
- Expected turnaround time is less than 1.5 hours after sample receipt in the laboratory
- Request for rapid PCR must be **communicated** to the laboratory:
  - Direct verbal request to technologist when NP swab is **hand-delivered** to Microbiology Laboratory (not Main Accessioning) from 7:00-22:00 weekdays (8:00-19:00 weekends); or
  - Contact Medical Microbiologist on-call
- Use of this test is currently limited to urgent clinical scenarios (potential/active outbreaks, critical care, or other scenarios at discretion of Medical Microbiologist)

### **SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) serology test:**

- Detects antibodies in serum specific to the SARS-CoV-2 virus
- Please refer to the [September 2020 laboratory bulletin](#)

## Surveillance Testing as directed by Public Health:

### **SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) point-of-care rapid antigen test:**

- Detects the presence of viral protein
- Less sensitive than NAT/RT-PCR; may detect individuals with high viral load, potentially correlating with period of transmissibility
- Use of this surveillance test is directed by Public Health only
- Not used for individual patient care; not ordered in Cerner
- For more information, please refer to:
  - [COVID-19 testing: One size does not fit all](#)
  - [Test sensitivity is secondary to frequency and turnaround time for COVID-19 screening](#)

