

LifeLabs COVID-19 Service Updates

Elyse Dumanski, Communications

As the world changes every day with the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), our thoughts have been with those affected by the virus and the health care workers who are continuing to serve at the frontlines of this pandemic. Like many, we want to do our part to help, and that's why we are stepping up to be part of the solution by implementing COVID-19 testing and maintaining collection services for medically required testing.

Patient Service Centre Operational Changes

As an essential service, we're here to serve you during this urgent public health crisis, but please note we have made some operational changes to maintain an adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), so we are able to continue to serve customers over the next few months.

After several weeks of adapting and adjusting our services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LifeLabs will be re-opening all temporarily closed BC patient service centre locations in order to provide critical support to the health care system in our communities and to ensure that hospitals can focus on acute and inpatient care.

The majority of temporarily closed patient service centres reopened by May 12, 2020, and all locations reopened by May 26, 2020. In order to conserve personal protection equipment and maintain social distancing practices, some locations will be operating at reduced hours. The most up-to-date information is available on our Location Finder tool at <https://locations.lifelabs.com/locationfinder>. We appreciate your understanding as we have adjusted our services in response to COVID-19.

Serving customers safely is our top priority

Following advice and recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada, our customer-serving employees are wearing full droplet PPE and we are actively screening customers as they enter.

Those that are identified as high risk for COVID-19 or that self-identify as vulnerable/immunocompromised are served immediately using special protocols to protect employees and customers.

We are also following social distancing precautions at all locations by limiting the number of customers that are allowed to enter at any time. We recommend that all customers use our Appointment Booking or virtual check-in app – Save My Spot – to limit time spent at our locations.

Mobile lab testing for vulnerable or immunocompromised customers

We understand that some customers are unable to leave their homes because they are more vulnerable than others to COVID-19. For this reason, we are ensuring we have adequate resources to provide collection services to those unable to leave their homes due to COVID-19 in addition to the existing criteria published on our website.

Health care providers can request home blood collection by contacting our mobile lab services team. More information and contact details can be found here: <https://www.lifelabs.com/tests-services/mobile-lab-services>.

During this time of uncertainty, we believe that it is important to keep the lines of communication open. We want to ensure that you feel connected and informed. If you have any questions about LifeLabs services during the COVID-19 pandemic, please do not hesitate to contact us at <https://lifelabs.com/contact-us> or 1-800-431-7206.

Specific Clinical Indications for Thyroid Testing

Dr Wes Schreiber, MD, FRCPC, Biochemist

In October, 2018 the Guidelines and Protocols Advisory Committee (GPAC) published a guideline document on Thyroid Function Testing. According to the guideline, TSH is the initial test for diagnosing and monitoring thyroid disease. Normal values of TSH preclude the need for measuring free T4 and/or free T3 in most situations. However, there are several specific clinical indications for ordering free T4 and/or free T3 when TSH is within the reference range.

Based on 5 months of experience with implementing the guideline, LifeLabs has more clearly defined the list of indications in the guideline to include the following:

- 1) **Suspicion of pituitary insufficiency** – Write “pituitary insufficiency” or “hypothalamic” (for hypothalamic disease) on the requisition
- 2) **Treatment of hyperthyroidism** – Write “treatment of hyperthyroidism” on the requisition
- 3) **Treatment of thyroid cancer** – Write “treatment of thyroid cancer” or “thyroid cancer” on the requisition
- 4) **Treatment with T3** – Write “treatment with T3” or “T3 therapy” on the requisition
- 5) **Unusual cases where analytical interference is suspected or the TSH result does not match the clinical situation.** The requisition must indicate that the ordering doctor has obtained approval from a laboratory physician or clinical biochemist.

When one of these indications appears on the requisition, we will perform all tests that are ordered. The new indications will take effect on June 8, 2020.

You can access the Thyroid Function Testing guideline at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/practitioner-pro/bc-guidelines/thyroid-function-testing.pdf>

2020 Health Care Providers Conference Postponed

Sangeeta Hussein, HCP Conference Organizer

Unfortunately, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Care Provider’s Conference has been postponed. Originally scheduled for Thursday, May 14th, 2020 at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel in Victoria, the conference has now been tentatively rescheduled for the evening of Thursday, October 8, 2020 at the same location.

Anyone who had already registered for the May 14th date will be contacted by the event coordinator about deferring their registration to the October date.

Guests who have made arrangements to stay at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel should contact the hotel directly regarding reservation changes or cancellations.

As guidance regarding social distancing evolves, it is possible that further changes will be made to the conference date or that limitations may be placed on attendance. For ongoing updates, please consult the conference website at <https://www.lifelabs.com/healthcare-providers/education-events/>.



LifeLabs' Critical Hematology Values and 24-hour Testing

Dr Anil Mangal, MD, FRCPC, Hematopathologist

As a partner in continuing patient care, and in order to provide all patients' results in a timely manner, the Lower Mainland LifeLabs' Hematology Laboratory is now a 24-hour operation. This means the laboratory staff may call you during any time of the day and/or night, whenever a critical hematology value is identified for your patients. LifeLabs' Critical Hematology values have mostly been aligned with BC Critical Values Consensus Statement (June 2016), which has been endorsed/ approved by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of BC, the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) and the Diagnostic Accreditation Program (DAP) of BC.

The following are LifeLabs' Critical Hematology values. Please note that some critical values (*), exceed the Consensus Statement so that patient safety is not compromised, since Lifelabs is a community outpatient laboratory practice.

Hemoglobin	<60 or >200 (except in neonates)* (g/L)
Neutrophils	<0.5 or ≥100 (for all ages)* (10 ⁹ /L)
Lymphocytes	>300 (10 ⁹ /L)
Platelets	<20 (10 ⁹ /L)
INR	>6.0
PTT	≥70 (s)
Fibrinogen	<0.8* (g/L)
Synovial Fluid	>25,000 (10 ⁶ /L)
Blood Film Malaria	Positive (Parasitemia % will also be

If your patient is known to have critical values (eg. on chemotherapy, etc), you may request an exemption and avoid being called by completing the "Doctors Special Handling Waiver Form, available at <https://lifelabs.azureedge.net/lifelabs-wp-cdn/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Special-Handling-Waiver-Form.pdf>

For further information or clarification, please feel free to contact the LifeLabs Client Information Centre (CIC) at 1-888-412-4528, or one of the LifeLabs hematopathologists.

2020 Antibiograms Now Available

Diana Whellams, MD, FRCPC, Medical Microbiologist

2020 British Columbia antibiograms are now available for health care providers. The antibiograms outline susceptibility rates for common respiratory, urinary and skin/soft tissue pathogens using data from 2019. Antibiograms for both the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island are available to help guide empiric treatment of outpatients.

To access the antibiograms, please

visit <https://www.lifelabs.com/healthcare-providers/reports/antibiograms/>

LifeLabs 2020 BC Lower Mainland Antibiograms

The following antibiograms are profiles of antimicrobial susceptibility testing results of pathogens submitted to LifeLabs from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 as per the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) document M39-A4.

ORGANISM	Number of isolates tested	ANTIBIOTIC (% susceptible)															
		Amoxicillin - Clavulanate	Ampicillin/ Amoxicillin	Azithromycin	Ceftriaxone	Ciprofloxacin	Clarithromycin	Erythromycin	Levofloxacin	Tetracycline	Penicillin (oral)	TMP-SMX	Ceftazidime	Gentamicin	Meropenem	Piperacillin-Tazobactam	Tobramycin
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	207	99	73		99	100				95	R	68					
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i> ¹	125		R								R						
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	114	R	R	R	R	77	R	R		R	R	R	96	90	96	98	94
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>	86		~95 ²	59	99			59	59	100	62	77	84				

¹ Susceptibility testing for *Moraxella catarrhalis* is not routinely performed. Most clinical isolates of *M. catarrhalis* are resistant to ampicillin but susceptible to ampicillin-clavulanate.