Health Care Providers Newsletter
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Cervical Cancer Screening Specimens

Dr. Romina Reyes, MD, FRCPC, Medical Director

Effective January 29, 2024, the BC Cancer Agency has implemented self-collected HPV vaginal swabs as an alternative to Liquid Based Cytology (Pap) testing for cervical cancer screening. LifeLabs will continue to facilitate transport of HPV swabs and or Liquid Based Cytology (Pap) samples to the BC Cervical Cancer Screening Lab (CCSL) for testing.

To ensure the most efficient handling and processing of samples for cervical cancer screening:

- If patients are self-collecting their HPV swab at home, please encourage them to mail the sample back following the instructions in their kit.
- If collecting HPV swabs in clinic, follow the collection and packaging Instructions for Health Care Providers for Cervix Self-Screening at the Clinic.
- If collecting Liquid Based Cytology (Pap) samples, package following instructions provided by CCSL.
- Ensure all samples for cervical cancer screening are packaged with a completed copy of the Cervical Cancer Screening Requisition.
- Ensure the outer package is clearly marked with destination "**CCSL**"

When sending samples for testing at LifeLabs in addition to cervical screening samples:

- Package samples for LifeLabs testing (ie: vaginal cultures) in a **separate bag** from cervical cancer screening samples.
- Ensure samples are packaged with a completed copy of a Standard Outpatient Lab Requisition.
- Be aware that the HPV screening swabs for testing at CCSL and the routine culture swab for testing at LifeLabs are visually similar but are **not** interchangeable.

	LifeLabs Copan Liquid Amies	**CCSL Copan FLOQSwab**
Swab		
	Has sponge at the bottom Red label	No sponge on the bottom Blue label
Test	Vag initial/chronic Routine bacterial culture	HPV (self-collected vaginal swab) HPV (clinic-collected vaginal swab)

Figure 1: LifeLabs Copan Liquid Amies vs. CCSL Copan FLOQSwab

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The LifeLabs BC Infectious Diarrhea Panel (IDP) Test and Stool Microscopy

Dr. Robert Liao, PhD, D(ABMM), Clinical Director of Microbiology and Molecular Diagnostics

LifeLabs BC introduced Infectious Diarrhea Panel (IDP) testing in September 2023 and joined the provincial change to offering a syndromic molecular panel to detect viral, bacterial, and parasitic stool pathogens. Only a single fecal swab specimen should be ordered per diarrheal episode. The BC Guideline for Investigation of Infectious Diarrhea provides additional guidance on the use of IDP testing.

Stool Microscopy Exam Not Indicated for Routine Diarrhea Testing

The LifeLabs BC IDP test replaces the stool microscopy exam (O&P microscopy) along with conventional stool bacterial culture for infections that cause diarrhea. Per the BC Guidelines and Protocols Advisory Committee (GPAC), traditional stool microscopy exam for protozoa should no longer be ordered for routine diarrhea testing because a single IDP test collected with a fecal swab has a higher sensitivity to detect the most prevalent parasites that cause diarrhea in BC: *Entamoeba histolytica*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *hominis*, *Giardia* species, *Cyclospora cayetanensis.*

When to Order Stool Microscopy Exam

Certain rare protozoal pathogens are not detectable by the IDP, and their detection still requires conventional stool microscopy. Additionally, when helminth (worm) infestations are suspected or would have significant clinical implications, stool microscopy should be ordered. Patients with certain risk factors along with persistent diarrhea and a negative IDP test result may have rare causes of infectious diarrhea where stool microscopy should still be considered:

- recent travel
- immigration from low- or middle-income country within 6 months
- immunocompromised status
- observation of worm in stool

How to Collect Stool for Microscopy Exam

The collection device for IDP testing (a single fecal swab) is not compatible with Stool Microscopy testing and vice versa. To obtain Stool Microscopy for a patient with a negative IDP result, the specimen must be collected with the SAF Stool Collection Kit which provides the required container with SAF colourless fixative.

- Only 1 specimen (SAF fixative) is usually required for stool microscopy however if there is a high suspicion then 2 specimens at least one day apart is still recommended to detect worm ova.
- In such cases, order Stool Microscopy by manually writing “Stool Microscopy” in the “Other Tests” section of the outpatient lab requisition.

A Special Note About Pinworm and Microscopy

Pinworm cannot be reliably detected by stool microscopy. For suspected cases of Pinworm (*Enterobius vermicularis*), request Pinworm in the “Other Tests” section of the outpatient requisition. This requires collection with the Pinworm Collection Kit (vial with paddle for collection), ideally with 3 separate paddle collections each a day apart.

The LifeLabs BC IDP Test will Detect:

Viruses: Rotavirus A, Norovirus GI/GII, Adenovirus 40/41, Astrovirus
Bacteria: *Salmonella* species, *Shigella* species, Enteroinvasive *E. coli* (EIEC), *Yersinia enterocolitica* and *Y. pseudotuberculosis*, *Campylobacter jejuni* and *coli, Vibrio* species (including toxigenic *Vibrio cholerae*), Shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC), *C. difficile.* (Note - stand-alone *C. difficile* testing is still available independent of the IDP)
Parasites: *Entamoeba histolytica*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *hominis*, *Giardia* species, *Cyclospora cayetanensis*

Links

For complete details and guidelines on using the IDP, please see: LifeLabs BC Infectious Diarrhea Panel (IDP) (*https://www.lifelabs.com/infectious-diarrhea-panel/?myProvince=bc*) or BC Guideline for Investigation of Infectious Diarrhea (*https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/bc-guidelines/infectious-diarrhea-guideline-for-investigation*)

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Standing Orders

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To align with the Provincial Standing Order Policy in effect January 1, 2024, LifeLabs has made the following changes to our policy for processing standing order requisitions:

Expiry Date

- The maximum time-period for a standing order has been changed from 2 years to 12 months
- Existing standing orders with 2-year expiry will be honoured until their original expiry date
- All new requests for standing orders, or renewals of existing standing orders, will be set up with a maximum expiry date of 12 months from the start date.

Effective (Start) Date and Duration of Standing Orders

- The duration of the standing order starts on the Effective Date indicated on the requisition.
- The Effective (Start) Date of a standing order may be post-dated up to 6 months past the date the requisition was completed.
- If there is no effective date stated on the requisition, the date the requisition was signed becomes the default Effective Date. If the requisition is not dated, the date the requisition was received at LifeLabs becomes the Effective Date.

To help us process your standing order patients more efficiently, please review the requirements and guidelines outlined in the Provincial Standing Order Policy and ensure the following for all standing order laboratory requests:

- Use a requisition approved under the *Laboratory Services Act* to request standing orders.
- Include clear instructions for the effective (start) date, frequency, and duration of the standing order.
- Complete a separate requisition for each standing order/frequency.
- To amend or renew an existing standing order, complete a new requisition, and add a notation to indicate that it is a replacement of the original.
- Notify LifeLabs to cancel active Standing Orders in the event that you leave your practice in BC. Standing orders are not transferable to other practitioners.
- Limit the use of standing orders to non-urgent, routine testing only. **Standing Orders will not be processed as STAT testing.**

Additional information about the implementation of the Provincial Standing Order Policy, including Frequently Asked Questions, can be accessed on the Provincial Laboratory Medicine Services webpage.