

# Protecting Ontarians Through Enhanced Testing



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### *Testing Based on Evidence*

Since **COVID-19** was first identified as a public health issue, Ontario has taken action on all fronts to respond to the evolving global pandemic. Testing for COVID-19 is one part of an extensive provincial plan to protect Ontarians throughout this outbreak. This has included the implementation of emergency orders, public health measures and an ongoing public education campaign to inform Ontarians to practice physical distancing, wear a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge and wash their hands often and thoroughly. Taken together, these actions are helping to keep individuals and families safe and healthy.

As Ontario exits the epidemic peak and gradually reopens the province, the focus is shifting to enhance the testing approach for Ontarians. Testing has been a critical part of understanding and following the transmission patterns of the virus. The province's approach to testing has evolved based on key objectives and evidence from Ontario and other jurisdictions, as well as the public health indicators that are being monitored closely. To date, Ontario has completed more than 680,000 tests and continues to lead Canadian provinces in daily testing volumes.

This new, expanded testing plan will provide valuable information about the spread of the virus in different communities across the province and help to better protect vulnerable populations and all Ontarians.

Case management and contact tracing go hand in hand with a comprehensive testing plan. As tests return positive results, it's vital that cases and their contacts are followed up with quickly and thoroughly by public health officials. The government will soon release a renewed strategy to support Ontario's public health units in this critical work, including launching a new exposure notification app that will alert Ontarians when they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and recommend appropriate actions, such as monitoring for symptoms, self-isolation and/or appropriate next steps on getting tested.

Further COVID-19 testing and expanded capacity for contact tracing and case management will provide the province with fast and comprehensive analytical data to understand trends and reduce the spread. Currently, Ontario's public health units are meeting and exceeding the target of 90 per cent of new

COVID-19 contacts being reached by local public health officials within 24 hours, a key measure in [A Framework for Reopening our Province](#).

### **Building on Government Actions**

- [Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19](#) increased public health funding by \$160 million to support COVID-19 monitoring, surveillance, and laboratory and home testing, while also investing in virtual care and Telehealth Ontario. (March 25)
- First meeting of the province-wide network of laboratory sites working in coordination to further increase capacity and test turn-around times for COVID-19 testing. (March 27, 2020)  
Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the province has dramatically increased testing capacity from 2,000 to well over 20,000 today.
- Launch of a user-friendly online portal that allows Ontarians to check COVID-19 lab results, designed to help ease pressure on public health units and frontline workers, allowing them to focus their efforts on combating COVID-19. (April 10)
- Launched [COVID-19 Action Plan: Long-Term Care Homes](#), which included enhanced testing for all residents and staff. (April 15)
- Launched [COVID-19 Action Plan: Protecting Vulnerable Ontarians](#), which included enhancing testing of symptomatic staff and clients to identify the need for isolation and additional infection control measures on-site. (April 23)
- Expanded testing guidance to include a broader range of symptoms for all populations and to help guide decision-making on testing of priority population groups. (May 14, 2020)

### **Outcomes**

As the province implements this next phase of its testing plan, it will:

- Identify, contain and monitor new cases and monitor the spread of COVID-19;
- Expand testing to all Ontarians to support public confidence and re-opening the economy;
- Ensure testing is accessible, available and widespread; and

- Learn from each testing phase about the spread of the virus in different communities across the province and help to protect vulnerable populations and all Ontarians.



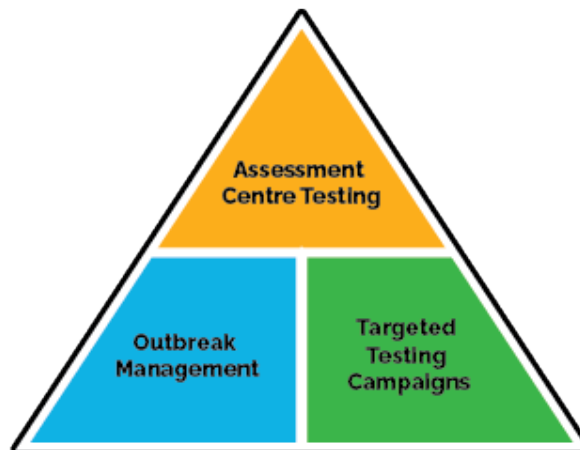
### The Plan

Working alongside Ontario Health and Public Health Ontario, the province has developed this comprehensive post-peak plan to enhance surveillance and testing across the province.

It is an evolving plan with each set of surveillance activities, including the assessment centres, providing more information as the approach is continuously refined and adjusted. In addition, the stage and prevalence of the disease will require the plan to be adjusted. The province and its partners are committed to learning, researching and evolving the plan as more is learned.

## Ontario's approach

to testing is driven by a coordinated effort across the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario and local public health units



### Assessment Centre Testing:

Individuals are tested in a variety of settings, including in assessment centres. New approaches are regularly being designed to make testing more accessible.

Ontario now has the most expansive guidelines in the country, including testing asymptomatic individuals concerned they may have been exposed to the virus.

Ontario is further reducing barriers to testing by advertising assessment centres online.

### Outbreak Management:

Public health units remain focused on case and contact management in containing and managing outbreaks. Ontario will support these efforts with its agile and rapid response capacity, including mobile testing.

### Targeted Testing Campaigns:

Plans are already in place to support enhanced testing for hospital workers, first responders, retirement homes and long-term care homes.

The province is also looking to expand testing to additional essential workplaces and is working collaboratively with sector leaders, including auto manufacturers, major retailers and trucking.

## Enhanced Testing for Enhanced Protection

### 1. Assessment Centre Testing: Expanding Who Gets Tested

As of May 24, 2020, Ontario broadened its testing direction to further strengthen provincial efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. An extensive public education campaign is being rolled out to ensure that Ontarians have the latest information on when and where to get tested. Ongoing engagement by



**Symptomatic:** People with at least one symptom of COVID-19, even mild and atypical symptoms. (Please see symptoms below)



**Asymptomatic, risk-based testing:** People who are concerned that they have been exposed to COVID-19. This includes people who may have been exposed to a confirmed or suspected case.



**Asymptomatic, risk-based testing:** People who are at risk of exposure to COVID-19 through their employment, including essential workers (e.g., health care workers, grocery store employees).

Ontarians is key to the success of the province's testing efforts.

To support Ontarians who have identified the need to get tested, as of May 24, 2020, people will no longer be required to get a referral to go to any of the nearly 130 assessment centres across Ontario for testing. Information about the assessment centres is now easily accessible on Ontario's [website](#), alongside an updated self-assessment tool to support Ontarians in determining if they should seek further care, including the ability to sign up for a follow-up call about their result from a medical student volunteer. Where available, people are encouraged to call ahead to schedule an appointment to help the assessment centres coordinate patients and maintain physical distancing at their locations.

**No Ontarian will be declined a test at an assessment centre (either through appointment or walk-in, per the processes of each individual assessment centre), especially those who are symptomatic or who are concerned they have been exposed to COVID-19**

## **2. Targeted Testing Campaigns: Detecting and Containing Cases**

In addition to expanding who gets tested, Ontario will also be proactively conducting testing to quickly detect outbreaks and actively monitor the spread among priority populations within hospitals, long-term care homes, group homes, shelters, emergency child care centres and other shared living spaces, as well as places where people are housed closely together. This will also include testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic frontline staff in long-term care and retirement homes, as well as hospitals experiencing outbreaks.

Ontario is also working to support testing for individuals and communities who may be at higher risk, including, for example, undertaking targeted testing initiatives in communities with higher rates of COVID-19 positivity.

As part of this branch of testing, Ontario will also work with higher-risk sectors, including first responders, home care workers, essential workers and other workplaces that are gradually reopening to design and implement expanded testing to ensure we protect workers and contain the spread of COVID-19. This could include retailers, transportation workers, auto workers and educators and school staff as schools open, among others. Moving forward, the province expects that private-sector workplace testing will leverage private and public resources as the government works with private-sector employers to develop the appropriate models for their environments.

## **3. Outbreak Management: Focusing Testing to Ensure Rapid Response**

In response to a declaration of an outbreak in a specific neighbourhood, region or institution such as hospitals, long-term care homes and educational settings, as well as workplaces, the province will rapidly deploy agile testing resources, such as mobile testing units, to contain any spread and protect communities across Ontario.

## Going Forward

**Increasing access to testing will continue** in partnership with Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, assessment centres and public health units, working collaboratively with various sectors, employers and unions. Outreach to these partners is already underway in order to confirm plans to expand testing in a way that recognizes the needs and circumstances of different settings and population groups.

Recognizing the unique circumstances of First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities across the province, Ontario will continue to work with the communities and their Indigenous health care providers to implement this plan in a way that supports them in accessing geographically appropriate and culturally safe approaches to testing.

As with all of the actions that Ontario has taken in its COVID-19 response, the health and safety of all Ontarians has been and will always be the priority. This updated and expanded testing plan supports the goals of controlling and managing outbreaks, validating that the controls that have been put in place are working and building an understanding of where to focus future testing.

The Ontario government would like to recognize the efforts of all frontline workers during this most difficult period. Through your dedication, determination and compassion you have helped to protect individuals and families and give us hope for a brighter future.

Thank you.

# Appendix A: Short-term Timeline

**May 25      May 26      May 27      May 28      May 29      May 30      May 31**

Ongoing symptomatic and asymptomatic testing at assessment centres
Long-Term Care Homes (monitoring and testing of all staff)
Retirement Homes (testing all residents and staff in homes with outbreaks)
LCBO (staff directed to local assessment centres)
Toronto First Responders and Families (police, fire, EMS, paramedics)
Hospital Workers at select hospitals across Ontario
Select Adult Correctional Facilities

**June 1      June 2      June 3      June 4      June 5      June 6      June 7**

Ongoing symptomatic and asymptomatic testing at assessment centres
Long-Term Care Homes (monitoring and testing of all staff)
Retirement Homes (planning and initiating testing of all staff )
Hospital Workers at Select Hospitals
School Boards Communications to build awareness on testing
Community-Based Testing (High COVID Active Communities)
Select Adult Correctional Facilities
Congregate Care Settings (emergency shelters, residential group homes for adults with developmental disabilities, VAW residential sites)



## Appendix B: Landscape of Populations and Settings for Testing (1 of 2)

All of the following populations and settings will be considered and incorporated into the testing plan, working closely with the community, businesses and stakeholders.

Long-Term Care Homes	Retirement Homes	Other Congregate Care Settings	Essential Workplaces*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul>	<p>Adult Correctional Facilities Emergency Homelessness Shelters</p> <p>Residential Group Homes for Adults with Developmental Disabilities</p> <p>Violence Against Women Residential Sites</p> <p>Intervenor Residential Sites</p> <p>Additional settings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensed Children's Residential Sites</li> <li>• Anti-Human Trafficking Residential Sites</li> <li>• Indigenous Healing &amp; Wellness Facilities/Shelters</li> <li>• Youth Justice Residential Facilities</li> <li>• Supportive Housing Providers</li> <li>• Homes for Special Care</li> <li>• Adult Mental Health and Addictions Residential</li> <li>• Bail Bed Program</li> </ul>	<p>Agri-Food Businesses</p> <p>Supply Chains</p> <p>Food</p> <p>Consumer Products</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Financial Services</p> <p>Telecom &amp; IT Infrastructure/Service Providers</p> <p>Maintenance</p> <p>Transport Services</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>Agriculture &amp; Food Production</p> <p>Construction</p> <p>Resources &amp; Energy</p> <p>Community Services</p> <p>Sports</p> <p>Research</p> <p>Health Care &amp; Social Services</p> <p>Media Industries</p> <p>Requirements that Apply to Businesses</p>

\*Source: Ontario List of Essential Workplaces

## Appendix B cont'd: Landscape of Populations and Settings for Testing (2 of 2)

Priority Populations**	First Nations and Indigenous Communities	Individuals in the Health System	General Population
<p>Hospital Workers</p> <p>First Responders and Their Families</p> <p>High COVID Active Communities</p> <p>High Risk Individuals as Identified via Contact Tracing</p> <p>Hospital Inpatients</p> <p>Healthcare Workers/ Caregivers/ Care Providers/ First Responders</p> <p>Persons Living in Same Household of Healthcare Workers/ Care Providers/ First Responders/ Emergency Child Care Centre Workers</p> <p>Remote/ Isolated/ Rural/ Indigenous Communities</p> <p>Specific Priority Populations</p> <p>Essential Workers</p> <p>Cross-Border Workers</p>	<p>First Nations</p> <p>Congregate Care Settings</p> <p>FNIM people living in urban areas</p>	<p>Specific Priority Populations</p> <p>Chemo/ Cancer Patients</p> <p>Dialysis</p> <p>Pre-/post-transplant</p> <p>Pregnant Persons</p> <p>Neonates</p>	<p>Individuals</p> <p>Workplaces</p> <p>Sectors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Environment and Resources</li> <li>• Culture and Community</li> <li>• Municipal Affairs</li> <li>• Economy and Growth</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Community Safety</li> <li>• Consumer Services and Protection</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Labour and Remuneration</li> <li>• Public Works and Infrastructure</li> </ul>

\*\*Source: Ontario COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance

## Appendix C: COVID-19 Symptoms

**Symptoms of COVID-19**, which is the disease caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus, range from mild — like the flu and other common respiratory infections — to severe.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever (feeling hot to the touch, a temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher)
- chills
- cough that's new or worsening (continuous, more than usual)
- barking cough, making a whistling noise when breathing (croup)
- shortness of breath (out of breath, unable to breathe deeply)
- sore throat
- difficulty swallowing
- runny, stuffy or congested nose (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes or conditions)
- lost sense of taste or smell
- pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- headache that's unusual or long lasting
- digestive issues (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain)
- muscle aches
- extreme tiredness that is unusual (fatigue, lack of energy)
- falling down often
- for young children and infants: sluggishness or lack of appetite

### **Call 911 if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:**

- severe difficulty breathing (struggling for each breath, can only speak in single words)
- severe chest pain (constant tightness or crushing sensation)
- feeling confused or unsure of where you are
- losing consciousness