

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Memorandum

To: Physicians and Health Service Directors, Central Zone

From: Dr. Todd Hatchette, Chief of Service, Central Zone Microbiology
Charles Heinstein, Manager, Central Zone Microbiology

Date: February 1, 2022

Subject: **Restarting of Some Routine Microbiology Testing**

Effective immediately, the Central Zone Microbiology laboratory will restart some of the testing that was suspended in December 2021 during the surge in COVID-19 testing.

The following services will be reoffered with the understanding that turnaround times may be delayed if COVID-19 volumes increase again:

- Chlamydia and Gonorrhea and routine HSV / VZV swabs for PCR
- Throat swabs for Group A *Streptococcus*
- Stool testing for viral gastroenteritis

The following tests will continue to be suspended to support the staff re-deployment required for COVID-19 testing:

- vaginal swabs for the assessment of bacterial vaginosis except in pregnant women or women who fail to respond to empiric treatment
- Oral swabs for fungal culture / stain and fungal culture for skin, hair and nails
- Stool microscopy for parasites and will continue to require approval by a microbiologist except those from the submitted by the Newcomer Health or Infectious Diseases clinics

Front line clinicians are encouraged to continue to reduce the ordering of the following;

- Urine cultures: Do not culture urine in asymptomatic individuals. Asymptomatic bacteriuria should not be treated *except in pregnant women* or prior to an invasive urologic procedure. Most inpatient urine cultures are unnecessary. Women with symptoms should be empirically treated with nitrofurantoin. See NSH Spectrum App or AMS website for guidance (<https://library.nshealth.ca/ams>) for other empiric options
- Skin Swabs: Avoid submitting swab specimens of superficial ulcers, especially of inadequately debrided wounds

We continue to apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your understanding and cooperation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the laboratory at 902-473-2120.