

COVID-19 testing in long-term care

Why are you introducing asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 in long-term care?

We continue to make changes to strengthen how the continuing care sector responds to a second wave of COVID-19. Enhancing our testing strategy is one way we are doing this.

Why only in HRM? Will this be implemented in facilities across the province?

We are targeting our efforts in HRM due to the recent rise of COVID-19 activity in the area. We will phase this testing in over the coming weeks. Additional facilities outside HRM may be considered based on the epidemiology within the province and lab capacity.

Who will get tested?

Testing will be available to employees who provide direct care to residents, volunteers, and designated caregivers.

Why are you only testing employees who provide direct care? Why not all staff at the facility?

We are taking a targeted approach to routine, asymptomatic testing in long-term care by having those who routinely have close and frequent contact with residents. We know that that they are the ones who are most likely to transmit the virus to a resident.

Are residential care facilities on the list or only nursing homes?

Currently, this applies to nursing homes, as this is where our oldest and most vulnerable live.

Is testing mandatory?

Participation is voluntary, but we would encourage staff, volunteers, and designated caregivers to take part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

How will testing be managed?

Each facility will develop a testing schedule that will see employees, designated caregivers and volunteers tested every two weeks on a voluntary basis.

Will you test residents?

No. Residents are not part of the testing strategy. We have implemented other measures and restrictions in long-term care to reduce and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Which test will you use?

We will use the PCR test, which is a nose and throat swab.

Why is the gargle test not an option?

The gargle test is being explored, but we are not holding up our testing strategy. We are proceeding with the swab/PCR test. We will update testing options as they become available.

Are staff required to isolate like other Nova Scotians while waiting for their test result?

No. They will continue to work while waiting for their test as the purpose of this testing strategy is about active surveillance. If someone tests positive, it will be referred to public health for immediate follow up and the individual would be required to isolate and follow the advice of public health.

