



## COVID-19 Media Lines

### Serology and Immunity Passports

**Issue statement:** The United Kingdom and Germany are working towards developing “immunity passports” that would be provided to individuals who have recovered from the virus and may have some level of immunity. Media attention on whether Canada will do something similar is possible.

**Key messages:**

- Our priority is and has always been protecting the health and well-being of Canadians.
- Each day we are adding to our knowledge of COVID-19, keeping pace with the rapid growth of new scientific evidence as it emerges. This is critical to decision-making.
- There is an active international effort to assess whether those who have recovered from illness are safe to go back to work. No decisions have been made yet in Canada on whether we can certify individuals with their immunity status.
- COVID-19 is an emerging virus and that means we need more data before we know if those who have recovered will have long-lasting protective immunity.
- Right now, we do not know if people who’ve recovered will have immunity, how long that immunity may last, or if it’s possible for individuals to get COVID-19 twice, or experience milder or more serious illness if they get COVID-19 a second time.
- We recognize that waiting for the science can be difficult but, while we learn more about COVID-19, we have to use public health measures that we know are effective.
- We are continuing to advise Canadians to stay home, practice good hand hygiene, and if you have to leave your home, practise physical distancing. These are tried and true public health measures that we know work.
- We are working hard to improve our understanding of COVID-19 across Canada so we can continue to adapt our response to slow the spread of the virus.

*If pressed on serological tests:*

- The Public Health Agency of Canada’s National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) is working on developing a number of in-house serological tests in addition to evaluating a variety of commercial tests for COVID-19.
- A serological test detects the presence of viral specific antibodies in patients’ blood and allows public health professionals to identify individuals who have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus.
- Serological testing can be used to determine the immune status of individuals by detecting antibodies in the blood of those who have recovered from the infection.

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- The ability to test for antibodies provides a deeper understanding of how the immune system responds to the virus that causes COVID-19, and provides a tool to assess new vaccines and other therapeutics or treatments.
- Serological testing will help increase diagnostic capacity, provide a means for studying community transmission and exposure rates, and the efficacy of new treatments.
- Developing and applying a serological test for COVID-19 has its challenges as this is an emerging virus and the performance of new tests require additional research. The NML and its partners are in the process of assessing a number of serological tests and collecting samples to evaluate them.

*If pressed on why Canada is not following the UK and Germany:*

- More research is needed before making decisions in Canada.
- Other respiratory viruses generally do not provide an individual with 100% immunity after recovery.
- Right now, we just do not know if individuals who have recovered from COVID-19 will have immunity, how long that immunity may last, or if it's possible for individuals to experience less severe or potentially more serious illness if they get COVID-19 a second time.
- Canada will continue working closely with international partners to share information on measures and best practices to inform our domestic approaches.

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