



BRIEFING COVID-19 testing in Canada

- We continue to **conduct a large number of screening tests** in Canada – at a rate that is among the highest in the world.
- To date, testing priority has been given to **individuals experiencing symptoms** and those in **high-risk situations**.
- This includes individuals working in **care settings, long-term care facilities and correctional institutions** or who are in situations where a positive case is linked to a high-risk environment that could be the source of an outbreak.
- As we head into the next phase, with the easing of some public health measures and the reopening of some sectors of the economy, **there will continue to be COVID-19 cases** until the population develops sufficient immunity or until a vaccine to prevent the disease is available.
- COVID-19 will be part of our lives **and testing will remain an important tool** for detecting and isolating new cases, to ensure follow-up with people who have been in close contact with these cases, and to stop the spread of the virus and prevent outbreaks in the community.
- Cases and outbreaks continue to be identified at an alarming rate in high-risk settings such as long-term care facilities. During the next phase, **it will be essential to screen groups at greatest risk of COVID-19 complications**. This screening will serve as a warning signal for our health system.
- **An increase in testing does not mean a more rapid resumption of normal activities** or a return to daily life as it was before COVID-19. **Testing does not replace public health measures**.
- No specific number of daily tests would allow us to ease public health measures in the same way and at the same pace in all regions of Canada. **The epidemic is manifesting differently** from one province or territory to another, and even from one region to another.
- We must also **test in an intelligent way**. People may be contagious before showing symptoms, while they have symptoms, and even if they have no symptoms at all. It is not logical to use all our resources and supplies to test where the number of cases is low and there is no evidence of community transmission.



- **It is essential to test at the right time.** A negative test can give people a false sense of security, because a negative result does not mean that the person has not been exposed to the virus. The person may become contagious in the days following the test, so it is better to do the test at least five days after potential exposure.
- Since May 5, we have been carrying out **an average of 20,000 tests per day** in Canada, **almost double** what we were doing a month ago. That number continues to increase.
- Canada is maintaining a positivity rate of between 6 and 7 percent, which is in the required range for **precise identification** of places where the disease is circulating.
- If the positivity rate dropped below 3 percent in Canada (to 1 percent, for example), that would mean that we are **casting the net too widely** by testing people who do not need it, such as:
 - those who are not in regions of Canada where the disease is circulating;
 - those who take a test too soon.
- The number of analyses and the positivity rate show that our **current testing system is highly sensitive**. We continue to increase the capacity of our laboratories so that it stays that way.
- Health Canada is working with manufacturers to allow for marketing commercial diagnostic instruments with the goal of **strengthening COVID-19 diagnostic capacity in Canada**.
- The Health Minister signed an Interim Order as an emergency public health measure to allow for accelerated access to medical devices related to COVID-19. Thanks to this order, **new diagnostic tests are available in Canada**. There is a list on Health Canada's [website](#).
- New diagnostic tests will be able to provide Canadian patients with **more rapid and more practical testing**.
- **We must stay the course and adhere to proven measures.** Whatever the level of testing where they live, all Canadians must do the following to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - **Stay home and away from others when they are sick.**
 - **Wash their hands frequently.**
 - **Clean common surfaces with an appropriate disinfectant.**
 - **Protect vulnerable people.**
 - **Practise social distancing.**



- Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is also **recommended in crowded public places and when it is not possible to systematically maintain a physical distance of 2 metres** between yourself and others.