

March 22, 2020

RE: Performing Any Lung Testing in Alberta During COVID-19

Dear Colleagues,

The following outlines provincial directives from the Provincial Respiratory COVID-19 Response Team* - **effective immediately.**

1. Since any lung testing poses significant risk of infection spread, it is strongly recommended that **all testing (including bedside spirometry, and especially methacholine challenge) ceases immediately**, with the exception listed below.
2. The **exception** is where the test is both urgent and COVID-19 risk is NOT high:
 - ❖ URGENT: time-sensitive and critical for clinical decision-making (e.g., suspected lung transplant rejection)
 - ❖ COVID-19 Risk NOT High: conduct a rigorous point of care risk assessment and then test only when risk of COVID-19 is NOT deemed to be high. See this resource for details of what is deemed to be high COVID-19 risk:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-ncov-case-def.pdf>

IF a lung test is deemed to be urgent and the COVID-19 risk is NOT high, technical staff **MUST follow the guidance below:**

Patient Management

- Ensure all patients wear a surgical mask both before and after the testing, particularly those who are coughing for any reason;
- Leave a minimum of at least 15 minutes between patients, to allow sufficient time for disinfection procedures to be performed and to be effective;
- Bring patients into the testing room immediately upon their arrival. Patients cannot wait in a waiting room. Ask patients to bring their cell phone and to wait outside the clinic in a safe isolated location until you are ready. Each patient must come in directly to the testing area and leave immediately afterwards;
- Inform those patients who need interpretation services to be ready for their appointment (interpreter present or available by phone and / or interpretation app downloaded); **and**
- Bring only one patient at a time into the testing facility.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Use appropriate PPE for an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP) for ALL lung tests: **consider any form of lung testing to be AGMP**. (Note that staff should be qualified to use the required PPE).
Details of PPE to be worn:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-respiratory-additional-precautions-assessment.pdf>
Rationale for considering all lung testing to be AGMP (Paste link into your browser to avoid errors):
https://www.csrt.com/wpcontent/uploads/Aerosol_Generating_Med_Proced_October_2014.pdf
- Follow AHS approved procedures to don and doff PPE:
 - Video:https://ahamms01.https.internapcdn.net/ahamms01/Content/AHS_Website/modules/ipc-guide-to-ppe-update/story.html
 - Learning Module:
https://ahamms01.https.internapcdn.net/ahamms01/Content/AHS_Website/modules/ipc/ipc-ppe-and-you/story_html5.html

Disinfection

- Conduct hand hygiene (at least 20 seconds and with soap and water) between every test and every patient;
- Use approved disinfection procedures that meet standards as directed during a pandemic, including hand hygiene between cleaning of each piece of equipment;
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-acute-healthcare-settings.html#a4.12>
- Disinfect all equipment according to the most current pandemic standards (see link in bullet point above) after **each** patient. At this time, manufacturers are suggesting to continue to follow the directions in cleaning manuals and a **new filter** must be used with each patient.
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-emerging-issues-ncov.pdf>

These measures are now deemed necessary as the risk of spread within all settings is now entering its most critical phase, and we must be both diligent and consistent.

You will be notified when risks to patients and staff related to pulmonary function testing are deemed to have returned back to baseline and routine testing practices can resume.

The latest COVID-19 details and resources (including everything listed above and translated posters) can be accessed here: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16947.aspx>.

*In an effort to provide our best available clinical guidance to support you in crucial time-sensitive efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, a **Provincial Respiratory COVID Response Team** was enacted by the provincial Emergency Coordination Centre. This team is comprised of respirologists, respiratory therapy practice leads, critical care and infectious disease specialists, and infection prevention & control, as well as our regulatory colleges.

The respiratory community in Alberta has been very proactive in their approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most labs have already taken extra precautions and moved to limit testing.

We appreciate your efforts and your diligence during these unprecedented times.

Please stay safe and keep well!

Respectfully,



Dr. Dale Lien
Senior Medical Director, RHSCN