

Comments for inclusion in public messaging – COVID-19 testing outside of accredited medical laboratories with licensed staff

The Department of Health strongly discourages the practice of employers offering COVID-19 testing to employees through its own unaccredited, non-medical laboratory facilities.

SARS-CoV-2 is classified as a Risk Group (RG) 3 human pathogen. Federally, unless exempted under the *Human Pathogens and Toxins Regulations* (HPTR), all *in vitro* and *in vivo* activities with SARS-CoV-2 are to be performed in accordance with a Pathogen and Toxin Licence issued under the *Human Pathogens and Toxin Act* (HPTA) and in a facility that meets the minimum applicable requirements for containment level 3 (CL3), as specified in the *Canadian Biosafety Standard* (CBS).¹ Contravening the *Human Pathogens and Toxin Act* in relation to performing activities outlined in sub-section 7(1) involving a human pathogen or toxin without a licence is associated with significant fines or imprisonment.

All medical laboratory testing should be performed in an accredited medical laboratory, by medical laboratory technologists (MLTs) registered with the New Brunswick Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists². The Society's mandate is to protect the public by ensuring that medical laboratory testing is performed by professionals who are trained and licensed to do so. Registered MLTs exercise independent judgment, accept responsibility for their actions, and recognize their accountability for the service they provide.

Registered MLTs are specifically educated in the practice of medical laboratory testing on human samples and have in-depth scientific knowledge of the theory, techniques, and clinical application of medical laboratory procedures. They are trained to evaluate the validity of test kits and use stringent quality control processes to make sure tests are accurate, and they know how to handle and dispose of biohazardous waste such as human samples.

Testing through a medical laboratory associated with New Brunswick's publicly-funded health system ensures that test results will be properly reported to the appropriate healthcare professional, personal health information will be safeguarded, and medical oversight and biosafety protocols will be in place.

As with many aspects of COVID-19, this situation is evolving as we learn more, and our advice may change over time.

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/biosafety-biosecurity/covid-19-biosafety-information-laboratories.html>
2. <http://nbsmlt.nb.ca/practice-of-medical-laboratory-technology.asp>