

# Pharmacy Benefact

A BULLETIN FOR PHARMACY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM ALBERTA BLUE CROSS

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## Asymptomatic COVID-19 testing paused

Today, the Chief Medical Officer of Health announced that effective immediately, there will be a pause on all asymptomatic testing conducted by AHS and community pharmacies until further notice.

Pharmacies should no longer book appointments or accept walk-in testing. Existing appointments can be honoured until November 4, 2020. Pharmacies should keep testing supplies on hand until further direction.

This is a strategic move to help prioritize testing and focus on testing where it has the greatest clinical value. AHS will continue testing any Albertan with symptoms, anyone who has no symptoms but is a close contact or is linked to an outbreak. These are the top priorities and the people most likely to have been exposed to COVID-19 will get their results as quickly as possible.

The cold and flu season means that, in addition to potentially contracting COVID-19, Albertans will have a greater chance of catching a cold or the flu which have very similar symptoms. Over recent weeks, there has been an increase in Albertans with COVID-like symptoms, and labs have been processing more tests than ever before. With the number of active cases and the number of symptomatic tests rising, further action is required in order to reduce testing wait times, get results to Albertans and limit the spread.

Faster results also mean that contact tracers will be reaching out to Albertans more quickly, further limiting the spread. Quicker turnaround times will also help mildly symptomatic students, parents and employees get results quicker and, if they are found to be negative, get back to school or work more quickly once their symptoms resolve.

The evidence has shown that asymptomatic individuals are not significantly driving the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta and thus asymptomatic testing is not an effective way to identify cases of COVID-19. The asymptomatic testing numbers to date show it is very rare to find cases in those without symptoms and without known exposure.

Alberta Health wants to thank all the community pharmacists who provided asymptomatic COVID-19 testing over the recent months. They stepped up when we needed them as they always do. With influenza immunizations now available, this shift will also help Albertans get their flu shot in participating pharmacies as quickly as possible.

### When you have questions:

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at:

**780-498-8370** (Edmonton and area) • **403-294-4041** (Calgary and area) • **1-800-361-9632** (toll free)

**FAX 780-498-8406** (Edmonton and area) • **FAX 1-877-305-9911** (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefits and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims. Visit [ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php](http://ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php)



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