

## Frequently asked questions: COVID-19 clinical assessment centres

*Last updated: January 17, 2022*

### 1. **What is the difference between a COVID-19 assessment centre and a COVID-19 clinical assessment centre?**

All COVID-19 clinical assessment centres in Ontario will offer standard elements of care, including patient identification, assessment and appropriate testing, diagnosis, and disposition planning. This approach builds on the COVID, cough and flu clinics and other influenza-like illness clinics established in the fall. While some assessment centres and COVID, cough and flu clinics already offer this full scope of services, other assessment centres have focused solely on testing. COVID-19 clinical assessment centres are not intended to reduce or replace testing capacity. Rather, they are intended to augment the existing assessment centre model.

### 2. **What is the target population of a COVID-19 clinical assessment centre?**

The COVID-19 clinical assessment centres are intended for patients with known or suspected COVID-19 with worsening symptoms or advised by a health care professional that they require an assessment and diagnosis for their symptoms. This is because their symptoms cannot be safely self-monitored at home, but they are also not experiencing severe symptoms that would require emergency care.

The COVID-19 clinical assessment centres are not intended for patients with mild COVID-19 symptoms who are self-isolating and self-monitoring at home or who can be monitored safely by their primary care provider at home.

The COVID-19 clinical assessment centres are also not intended for patients with severe COVID-19 symptoms, who must be directed to call 911 or go directly to the emergency department.

The [Centre for Effective Practice's guidance for primary care providers](#) outlines when providers should consider directing a patient to a clinical assessment centre. This guidance was developed in collaboration with the primary care community.

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### 3. What services do COVID-19 clinical assessment centres provide?

The following services are available for patients at clinical assessment centres:

1. Assessment and testing
  - Assessment by an appropriate health care professional, which may include oxygen saturation, vital signs, and identifying relevant risk factors/comorbidities.
  - Testing may include using a rapid test, if appropriate and in keeping with the provincial guidance.
2. Diagnosis
  - Diagnosis by an appropriate health care professional
3. Disposition planning
  - Depending on the patient's condition and risk factors, disposition options may include:
    - Home with self-monitoring, if appropriate
    - Home with remote care monitoring as available in your region (e.g., [COVID@Home Monitoring for Primary Care](#))
    - Direct to emergency department for further investigation
    - Direct to inpatient COVID-19 unit, where possible
    - Outpatient therapeutics, where available

### 4. How will patients be directed to a COVID-19 clinical assessment centre?

Patients may be directed to a COVID-19 clinical assessment centre by:

- Self-referral/walk-in (walk-ins may be limited based on local context, e.g., to support equity in access for populations with the greatest need)
- Telehealth
- Primary care provider or other health care professional
- Emergency department
- Assessment centres that offer testing only

### 5. Will testing/swabbing be available at COVID-19 clinical assessment centres?

Testing for COVID-19 will follow the latest provincial guidance and will be offered if indicated. To support disposition planning at the time of the clinical assessment, rapid tests may be preferred by the assessing clinician, if available.

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## 6. Where should patients seeking a test for return-to-work purposes be directed?

Patients who meet the testing criteria for return-to-workplace testing should attend an assessment centre that offers swabbing only.

## 7. What is the process for referring patients to a clinical assessment centre?

You may direct patients to book an appointment at a local clinical assessment centre. The list of clinical assessment centres in operation as of January 17, 2022, is available in the memo distributed with this document. The [COVID-19 testing locations website](#) will soon be updated to include a filter for assessment centres at which clinical assessment is available; when available, this website will provide the most up-to-date information.

## 8. As a primary care provider, I already provide care for patients who have COVID-19. When should I direct patients to the clinics vs. managing their care myself?

COVID-19 clinical assessment centres are not intended to replace care being provided in primary care settings. Rather, primary care providers can consider directing patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to these clinics if the patient needs to be examined in-person, but the provider is unable to safely see the person in their own clinic. The [Centre for Effective Practice's guidance for primary care providers](#) (developed in collaboration with the primary care community) outlines when you should consider directing a patient to a clinical assessment centre, including:

- Symptoms or patterns of symptoms
- Underlying illness or risk factors that may need to be assessed to determine differential diagnoses, treatment of underlying illness, and/or eligibility for COVID-19 treatment
- Your ability to monitor and/or assess the patient remotely

## 9. Will clinical assessment centres offer ongoing care or monitoring?

No. Clinical assessment centres are not meant to replace ongoing care or monitoring being provided in primary care settings. Patients may be connected with remote care monitoring at home, if available and appropriate.

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## **10. Will the clinical assessment centres direct patients to monoclonal antibody therapy?**

There is a very limited supply of monoclonal antibody drugs available in Ontario. Seven sites are piloting outpatient clinics to administer monoclonal antibody therapy. Patient eligibility is based on the evidence-based guidelines developed by Ontario's COVID-19 Science Advisory. If a patient is eligible, clinical assessment centres will refer them to the nearest pilot site.

## **11. Will the clinical assessment centres offer oral antiviral treatment for COVID-19?**

When oral antivirals are approved and supply becomes available, clinical assessment centres will be considered a potential setting where oral antivirals are prescribed and dispensed. Patient eligibility will follow evidence-based guidelines.

## **12. What if there is not currently a clinical assessment centre in my area to direct patients to? Will all assessment centres eventually be converted to clinical assessment centres?**

The availability of COVID-19 clinical assessment centres varies based on local context. In some communities, care is provided through different models that optimize the available health human resources to best meet the needs of the community. Health care professionals in areas without a clinical assessment centre should continue to provide care through their usual pathways.