

DATE:	26 October 2026
TO:	All Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory
RE:	Saliva Swab from Newborn Baby is an Acceptable Specimen for Cytomegalovirus (CMV) Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Test

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Effective November 1st, Saliva swab will be an acceptable specimen for CMV PCR at APL– Public Health Laboratory.

Background

- CMV is the most common cause of congenital infection, affecting 0.5% to 1% of live birth in North America¹. Timely diagnosis of congenital CMV will improve the outcome. Ideally, CMV PCR should be performed in urine samples from an infant before 21 days of age. Because of the challenges of collecting urine, especially from premature infants, saliva is considered a good alternative sample type.
- APL– Public Health Laboratory has validated saliva swab as an acceptable specimen. When CMV PCR is positive in a saliva sample, a follow up urine sample should be sent for confirmation.

Action Required

- Please follow the collection instructions.
 - Use Flocked Swab and Universal Transport Medium (UTM).
 - Label the container with at least two identifiers.
 - Perform hand hygiene and put on gloves +/- other PPE as needed.
 - Swab the inside of the baby's mouth until the swab becomes saturated with saliva. If the baby is intubated, enter the side of the baby's mouth to swab the mucosa on the inside of the cheek. Make sure the swab gets saturated.
 - Remove the screw cap from the tube and insert the swab to the bottom of the tube.
 - Please ensure the screw caps are well-tightened for these samples, so there is no risk of leakage.
- Make sure to collect the sample **at least 1 hour after breast feeding** to avoid false positive results.
- All** positive CMV PCR from saliva sample should be confirmed with CMV PCR in urine.
- Test ordering instruction in Connect Care:
 - Under "CMV NAT", select "Other CMV Infection" (Specimen Urine, Bone Marrow, CSF, Amniotic Fluid or Throat swab).
 - In the "specimen type" drop-down list, select "saliva".
 - Then click "Mouth" as "specimen source".



Effective November 1st, 2026

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

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Approved by

- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical/Scientific Director, Public Health Laboratory, APL

Reference

1. Vaudry W, Lee BE, Rosychuk RJ. Congenital cytomegalovirus infection in Canada: Active surveillance for cases diagnosed by paediatricians. Paediatr Child Health 2014;19(1):e1-5.