

Understanding the Spread of COVID-19: Asymptomatic Testing for Truck Drivers

To better understand how COVID-19 is spreading in Manitoba, public health officials are conducting surveillance testing of people without symptoms of COVID-19 (asymptomatic people) who work in the trucking industry.

This is being done to monitor COVID-19 infections in people who are not experiencing symptoms. Expanding the testing criteria to monitor the spread in people without symptoms will help officials monitor the spread of COVID-19 in Manitoba as social (physical) distancing measures are eased.

What is asymptomatic testing?

Different types of surveillance is used to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Officials have been testing people with symptoms of COVID-19 at community testing sites. A health care provider uses a nasopharyngeal swab to take a sample and sends it to the laboratory for COVID-19 testing. This type of surveillance is called symptomatic surveillance.

Testing people without symptoms is called asymptomatic surveillance. It is another way of collecting data on how COVID-19 spreads in the community.

Why is the province offering asymptomatic testing to truck drivers?

Due to frequent out-of-province travel as essential service workers, Manitobans without symptoms working as truck drivers are now eligible for testing. Testing is voluntary and intended to provide protection for Manitoba truck drivers as well as peace of mind for their family members and the communities they live in and serve.

How are people tested for COVID-19?

A health care provider takes a nasopharyngeal swab (a swab of the throat and nose). The sample is then sent to the lab for COVID-19 testing.

How can truck drivers get tested?

Truck drivers can present to community testing sites and request asymptomatic COVID-19 testing. For information on where community testing sites are located, visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19/locations.html

While waiting for results truck drivers do not need to self-isolate, however they should self-monitor for symptoms. Individuals testing positive will be contacted by Public Health officials and provided further instructions.

Will I need to self-isolate? Can I still work?

Testing results only reflect whether a person has COVID-19 at the time of testing. If you are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and have not had any recent known exposures (through close contact or travel), you do NOT need to self-isolate. Please note that even if you test negative you still need to continue practicing good hand hygiene, cover your cough and practice good social (physical) distancing.

If your test result comes back positive for COVID-19, you are required to self-isolate for 14 days from when your swab was taken. This could be extended if you develop symptoms at a later date. Public health officials will provide you with additional advice to care for yourself while you are recovering from COVID-19.

If someone tests negative, but gets sick later, even if symptoms are mild, they will need to immediately self-isolate and get retested for COVID-19. For information on self-isolating, visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19/prepareandprevent.

Note: All workers traveling in and out of Manitoba should refrain from visits to a personal care home or other long-term care unless they have self-isolated for 14 days. This is to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to vulnerable Manitobans.

How often can drivers be tested?

Truck drivers who travel outside the province, transporting goods and materials are eligible for COVID-19 testing upon entering and/or returning to the province, but not more frequently than once a week.

Is there anything I should do to reduce my risk of getting COVID-19?

Regardless of whether someone chooses to have asymptomatic testing or not, all travellers who are exempt from self-isolation should:

- Minimize their close contacts and keep track of those they are in contact with in case they test positive (either with asymptomatic testing or because they developed symptoms and were tested).
- Maintain an appropriate physical distance (at least two metres/six feet) from others, and follow all general public health measures (e.g. hand hygiene, cough etiquette, etc.).
- Where possible, avoid settings where physical distancing is not possible (e.g. public transit).
- Take appropriate precautions to protect close contacts who are at highest risk of serious complications from COVID-19 (i.e. people older than 60 years and those living with chronic conditions).
- While travelling, bring essential supplies (food, water, disinfectant wipes, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, etc.) if possible to enable self-isolation during trip.
- Increase regularly scheduled cleaning with a disinfecting agent or antimicrobial disposable wipe inside each vehicle and any shared spaces.

Where can I get more information and find out my test results?

Public health officials will contact you directly should your test result come back positive for COVID-19. Negative results can be accessed securely online at <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/test-results/>. Test results typically take 24 to 48 hours to be processed, and should be available within two to three days.

If you do not have a Manitoba Health Family Registration Card, are not a resident of Manitoba, or you are unable to access your negative test results, you can call the Public Health COVID-19 Contact Centre between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., 7 days a week, at 1-844-960-1984.

If you have any other questions about COVID-19, please call Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or (toll free) at 1-888-315-9257, or visit Manitoba.ca/COVID19.