



Shortage of Medical Supplies

On January 19, 2022, the FDA in USA expanded their medical device shortage list to include all blood specimen collection tubes. This is being driven by the increase in demand during COVID-19. For that reason the FDA has recommended that health care providers, laboratory directors, phlebotomists, and other personnel consider blood specimen collection tube conservation strategies to minimize blood collection tube use and maintain quality and safe patient care for those where testing is medically necessary. Here is a link to the Jan 19 FDA Update. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/letters-health-care-providers/update-blood-specimen-collection-tube-conservation-strategies-letter-health-care-and-laboratory> .

This shortage of blood collection tubes is starting to surface in Ontario with interruptions in vendor supply chains.

The **OAML Working Group on Strategies to Conserve Collection Tubes and Devices** has developed recommendations to help mitigate the impact of these shortages of collection tubes and other supplies while continuing to provide medically necessary services for patients.

Laboratory members are being asked to follow the recommendations below and communicate these to your ordering health care practitioners:

Recommendations from Team to Healthcare Providers

- For the next 4-6 months, use laboratory testing only when clinically indicated
- When testing follow laboratory guidelines on grouping tests on single tubes to make the most efficient use of tubes
- Don't do annual screening blood tests unless directly indicated by the risk profile of the patient
- Don't perform repeat test ordering (re-testing) at a frequency that is not backed by evidence^{1,2}
- Review and consider halting standing orders whenever possible (e.g. HbA1C) and proceed with standing orders which are absolutely needed (e.g. INR)
- Use Ontario Laboratory Information System (OLIS) to identify tests that have been ordered already to prevent unnecessary repeat orders
- Don't order tests in asymptomatic patients (e.g. Thyroid testing, protein electrophoresis)

Additional Information

Your practitioners should also understand that:

- Supplies for Microbiology tests are not a concern at this time; concern is blood tests
- Laboratories are seeking alternative products, but there is a global shortage across multiple suppliers
- Laboratories are reviewing internal processes to consolidate tubes and reduce the number of primary tubes being drawn from patients



- If these shortages continue to escalate, laboratories will need to implement strategies to reduce or stop non-urgent testing
- Labs may need to discontinue supplying tubes and collection devices (e.g. Tube holders and needles) to independent physicians in order to manage the inventory and to minimize the number of tubes being inappropriately collected

References

1. Lang T and Croal B. "National minimum retesting intervals in pathology." www.rcpath.org, March 2021, The Royal College of Pathologists, https://www.rcpath.org/uploads/assets/253e8950-3721-4aa2-8ddd4bd94f73040e/g147_national-minimum_retesting_intervals_in_pathology.pdf. Accessed March 24, 2022.
2. Orth M, Aufenanger J, Hoffmann G, Hofmann W, Klosson R, Lichtinghagen R, Otte K, Stamminger G, Stiegler Y, Wiegel B, Wieland E, and for the Laboratory Medicine Section of the German Society for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine. Recommendations for the frequency of ordering laboratory testing. *LaboratoriumsMedizin*. 2015;38(s1): 000010151520140045. <https://doi.org/10.1515/labmed-2014-0045>

March 24, 2022