

# MEMORANDUM

**TO: PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS**

**FROM: Dr. Edward Randell, Regional Clinical Chief of Laboratory Medicine**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2022**

**RE: Blood Collection Material Shortage**

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Clinical laboratories in Canada are experiencing interruptions in the supply of blood collection materials including tubes, blood gas syringes, butterfly needles, plus others. This is challenging our ability to maintain routine blood collection services.

To address shortages clinical laboratories are exploring alternative supplies and reducing unnecessary redundancy. This includes limiting the number of tubes at blood collection to a maximum of three:

1. One gold top for clinical chemistry tests;
2. One lavender top for CBC and hematology tests; and
3. One light blue top for coagulation; or other tube for esoteric testing (*if required*)

These measures are **NOT** enough to address the shortages, which are expected to continue into the coming months.

There is an **urgent** need to promote conservation among practitioners to help sustain supplies.

As a health care practitioner, you can take important steps to help mitigate this risk by assuring:

- Every practice should restrict blood testing to patients who are a high priority for clinical care.
- Delay ordering non-urgent laboratory tests, as appropriate, until supply chains have bolstered.
- Adjust the frequency of monitoring tests to the maximum time acceptable (e.g., INR, CBC, TDM, A1c, routine chemistries, etc.) after a risk assessment based on the patient's history.
- Delay performing annual "health screening" blood tests for your patient unless directly indicated by the patient's risk profile.
- Where possible, plan testing for patients with other care providers, and include required testing in the same order.
- Note that in some cases, the laboratory supports reflex testing (e.g. Ferritin done with abnormal CBC). Where feasible, add tests to recent specimens so that an additional collection is not required.
- Familiarize yourself with the new Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations entitled "[Using Labs Wisely During Global Blood Tube and Other Resource Shortages](https://choosingwiselycanada.org/event/cwtalks-feb24/)" (<https://choosingwiselycanada.org/event/cwtalks-feb24/>).

The Laboratory Program is carefully monitoring supplies. If supplies become critically low laboratory specimen collection service interruptions may be required.