

SA Pathology Newsletter November 2020

Amazing response



SA Pathology has been awed by the phenomenal community response to the Parafield cluster. So far nearly 74,000 people have presented to our collection centres to be tested since Sunday 15 November.

Well done South Australia - a brilliant effort!

Benefits of referring



With testing locations across the state, it has never been easier for South Australians to access a COVID test. This is vital, as rigorous testing is the key to eliminating the virus, and crucial to us continuing to enjoy fewer restrictions in our everyday lives.

SA Pathology is urging GPs to provide patients seeking a COVID test with a referral form, as this ensures:

- patients receive necessary clinical follow up, and
- the result can be uploaded to the GP's practice software, and the patient's My Health Record if opted in.

People attending a COVID testing site should wear a mask, and remain isolated until they receive their result. People in self-isolation or self-quarantine need to remain at their place of quarantine for the prescribed period even if they return a negative test result.

COVID-19 testing requirement for travellers to China



On 2 November 2020, Chinese embassies and consulates advised that travellers flying from Australia directly to China are to produce a documented negative SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) and a documented negative IgM serology test within 48 hours of departure. Additional requirements are expected for travellers transiting through a third country. For more information, [click here](#).

SA Pathology can provide the required NAAT test, and our commercial SARS-CoV-2 serology assay detects total immunoglobulin, including IgM. Our serology report will contain a comment to that effect to meet Chinese travel requirements. SARS-CoV-2 serology requests generally require approval from a medical officer from the Communicable Diseases Control Branch. SA Pathology will waive this requirement if the requester writes 'Traveller to China' on the request form.

SA Pathology will have a phlebotomist available to attend the RAH COVID-19 collection centre between 9 am and 11 am daily to collect the necessary blood specimen. Travellers are encouraged to take their request form for COVID NAAT and COVID serology to the RAH COVID-19 clinic between these hours to enable a hard-copy result within 48 hours.

SA Pathology will provide NAAT and serology reports direct to the traveller. Hard-copy printed reports can be collected by the traveller in person from the SA Pathology Frome Road Specimen Reception desk upon presentation of a valid passport the day following the date of collection. This service is available between 11 am and 5 pm, 7 days.

Changes to reference intervals



Effective from Tuesday 10 November, SA Pathology implemented the following changes to reference levels.

B-OH-Butyrate

- < 7 yrs age 0.1 – 1.0
- > 7 yrs age < 3.0

This change follows consultation with metabolic physicians.

There is no change in the reference interval for adults, and no change in the upper reference limit which is relevant for the investigation of ketoacidosis.

B-OH-Butyrate is generally used to investigate hypoglycaemia in infants.

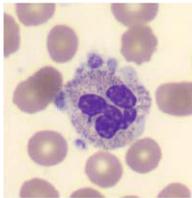
Urate

- Males \geq 18 yrs age 0.20 – 0.42
- Females \geq 18 yrs age 0.14 – 0.34

A recent review of patient data confirmed that women usually have a slightly lower urate than men - accordingly, the new reference intervals will enable earlier detection of high urate in women.

This change is for adult males and non-pregnant adult females. There is no change in the reference interval for children or pregnant women.

Changes to platelet antibody testing



SA Pathology advises that the majority of laboratory testing for platelet antibodies is now performed by Lifeblood (formerly Australian Red Cross Blood Service) in Melbourne, with the exception of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia testing which is still performed in the SA Pathology Royal Adelaide Hospital laboratory.

Platelet antibody testing is available and may be useful for confirmation and further management of neonatal alloimmune thrombocytopenia, post-transfusion purpura, platelet transfusion refractoriness, heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and sometimes other drug-induced thrombocytopenia. However, routine testing for platelet autoantibodies for the diagnosis of immune thrombocytopenia (ITP) is not recommended.

Testing for ITP is not generally useful as the test has a low sensitivity. Other causes of thrombocytopenia have to be excluded and the test is only performed if the platelet count is $<100 \times 10^9/L$. The sample needs to be stored and transported at room temperature and needs to reach the laboratory within 48 hours of collection. Further advice may be sought from the Duty Haematologist if necessary - phone 8222 3960.

Click here to complete a request form for platelet investigation performed at Lifeblood and to access instructions on which specimens are required, as well as storage, transport and other useful information.

For more information on the conditions where platelet antibody tests may be useful, and where testing is not recommended, please read the full article.

[Read the full article](#)

Australian-first for newborn screening



South Australian clinicians are able to access the results of newborn screening sooner than ever before, thanks to an Australian-first initiative from SA Pathology.

SA Pathology's Clinical Director of Genetics and Molecular Pathology, Dr Janice Fletcher, said from early November, state-wide results will now be accessible electronically as soon as the testing is complete.

"In the past, clinicians would have to speak to the laboratory over the telephone or wait up to two weeks for the printed results of newborn screening," Dr Fletcher said.

"Thanks to software improvements, the results can now be loaded electronically into our Laboratory Information Management System, 'Millennium'.

"This means SA Health clinicians can instantly check the results via the Clinical Information System or their hospital's Electronic Medical Record. Results requiring immediate attention will still be communicated directly to the requesting clinician."

'Newborn screening' or the 'heel prick test' is performed around 48 hours after a baby is born and is used to detect more than 25 rare disorders including cystic fibrosis.

A midwife or nurse performs the test by pricking the baby's heel and putting a few drops of blood onto filter paper which is then sent for testing at SA Pathology's newborn screening laboratory at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH).

WCH Head of the Metabolic Clinic, Dr Drago

Bratkovic, said having electronic access to the vital results will be an added bonus.

“Allowing all clinicians to have 24/7 access to the results of the newborn screening test will greatly assist in making a diagnosis for newborns who are severely unwell in the first few weeks of life,” Dr Bratkovic said.

“It will also help to avoid potentially unnecessary investigations and interventions.”

Doctors and midwives looking after babies born in private hospitals or at home can also access their results in electronic form or the currently available printed report.

International Pathology Day 2020



On 11 November staff across SA Pathology acknowledged International Pathology Day, an annual awareness day dedicated to highlighting the fundamental role of pathology in maintaining health and wellbeing.

This year, more than ever before, pathology testing has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of communities across the globe. In the critical early days of the pandemic, SA Pathology's COVID-19 testing rate was among the highest nationally and internationally, and remains the third highest testing rate per population in Australia. Since the beginning of the pandemic, SA Pathology has performed almost 580,000 COVID-19 tests.

In addition to COVID-19 testing, SA Pathology has maintained its regular service levels during the pandemic. Each year SA Pathology performs more than 6.5 million pathology tests, working in partnership with the wider health community to deliver better health outcomes for all South Australians.

We thank you for your continued support of SA Pathology and are proud to play an important role in the delivery of public health care in South Australia.

CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION

SA Pathology has been at the forefront of the response to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Our team of dedicated clinicians, scientists, technicians, nurses and support staff are working 24/7 to ensure the health and wellbeing of all South Australians.

Visit our COVID-19 webpage to find the latest information, health updates and resources on COVID-19.

[Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

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