

POINT OF CARE TESTING (POCT)

Point-of-care testing (POCT) is laboratory testing conducted close to the site of patient/resident care. It is also known as bedside testing, near-patient testing, remote testing, mobile testing, and rapid diagnostics. It provides rapid test results that can expedite patient/resident care decisions to improve care. Common examples of POCT devices or actual tests used for testing include:

- Glucometers for measuring blood sugar
- Handheld chemistry analyzers to perform tests such as creatinine, electrolytes, hemoglobin, troponin, cardiac enzymes, PT/INR, and blood gases
- Dipsticks for urine chemistry testing
- Refractometers for measuring specific gravity
- SARS-CoV-2 Rapid testing
- Rapid Strep testing

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regulates all laboratory testing (except research) performed on humans in the U.S. through the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA). CMS requires education and training of all personnel who will perform POCT, and that quality control measures are in place to ensure reliable test results. Errors can occur anywhere in the testing process, particularly when the manufacturer's instructions are not followed and when testing personnel are not familiar with all aspects of the test system.

- Incorrectly handled specimens have the potential for serious health impacts.

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 1250W/HQI/QIN-QIO-0534-05/10/23

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Remember: perform hand hygiene, using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves when collecting the sample and performing testing.

MEASURES TO ENSURE RELIABLE, HIGH QUALITY TEST RESULTS

- Clean work surfaces and reusable devices before and after testing
- Store all reagents and media as instructed by the manufacturer
- Document expiration dates of reagents/kits, and discard any reagents or tests that have expired
- Allow time for refrigerated reagents/samples to come to room temperature prior to testing if required by the manufacturer's instructions
- Perform equipment calibration checks, as needed, following the manufacturer's instructions
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use of the appropriate collection device and sample volume needed for testing
- Use timers and follow the required timing intervals before reading test results
- Have a regular schedule for maintaining testing equipment
- Clean patient/resident's skin with proper disinfectant, allow to air dry, and do not touch sampling area to eliminate chance of contamination
- Positively identify the patient/resident before collecting a sample and appropriately label specimen



Ready? Set? Test! is a training program available through the CDC. The goal of this course is to promote reliable, high-quality testing and enhance patient safety. This course offers free continuing education credits.



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