

Fact Sheet

Patient Choice and Self-Referral for Preventative Health Testing

What is Patient Choice Self-Referral?

Patient Choice Self-Referral is an Alberta initiative that will expand access to certain health tests called preventative health testing (PHT) services. It will give Albertans more choice in how they manage their health.

Through the initiative, you can obtain certain tests – such as an MRI, CT, ultrasound, and x-ray – without a referral from a healthcare provider. You would pay for the PHT service yourself at the time you receive it.

PHT services are considered extended health benefits under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. They must be delivered by a regulated health practitioner in Alberta. PHT services may be reimbursed up to maximum limits, with government as a payor of last resort.

It's important to know that PHT services are not the same as preventative screening programs such as breast or colorectal cancer screening. Alberta's screening programs are designed to help detect certain conditions in people who meet specific screening requirements. The new policy does not change or replace Alberta's existing screening programs, which will continue to be publicly funded and available.

Who is this for?

This initiative is intended for individuals who:

- Want to access diagnostic imaging services without a provider referral.
- Are considering preventative health testing to proactively manage their health care.

These changes are expected to:

- Support earlier detection of health concerns.
- Improve overall health outcomes.
- Ease pressure on the public system by allowing Albertans to choose private testing facilities for elective, non-urgent testing.

Eligibility

To access a PHT service in Alberta, you must be:

- 18 years of age or older,

- A minor with consent from your parent or legal guardian.

Before providing a test, the provider must make sure it is safe, appropriate, and understood by the patient, including risks and limitations.

Reimbursement

Albertans may be eligible for reimbursement if the PHT service results in a new cancer diagnosis. To qualify for reimbursement, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older and an Alberta resident (a legal guardian can apply for a minor).
- Receive the PHT service on or after July 31, 2026, from a regulated health practitioner at an accredited Alberta facility.
- Submit the claim within 365 days following the date of the new clinical diagnosis of cancer.
- Submit any private insurance claims first, because government is the payor of last resort.

A claim form will be available to apply.

Accessing Preventative Health Testing

Albertans can choose a testing facility that offers PHT services and is accredited by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta.

As healthcare providers and testing facilities work to implement the new policy requirements, preventative health testing services may become available at different times across the province. Patients are encouraged to check with individual providers or facilities for the most up-to-date information about service availability.

Results from PHT services will be uploaded to the Electronic Health Record.

Accredited testing facilities meet Alberta's safety and quality standards. PHT service providers must clearly communicate all pricing and billing practices upfront, including how the reimbursement process works.

Alberta's Public Health Guarantee

Patient Choice Self-Referral is intended to support our publicly funded healthcare system, helping to keep it strong and accessible.

Under Alberta's Public Health Guarantee, all tests ordered by a healthcare provider will continue to be fully covered and prioritized across all PHT providers – public or private – in the province.

For more information, please visit
<https://www.alberta.ca/preventative-health-testing>.

For reimbursement inquiries, please email
PPHS.PHTreimb@gov.ab.ca.