



Guidance on Collecting COVID-19 Samples for Non-Clinical Community Partners

Thank you for your commitment to slow the spread of COVID-19 in North Carolina. Proper collection of samples is the most important step in diagnosing COVID-19. This document provides guidance on how to prepare for and collect nasal (nose) and nasopharyngeal (back of nose) COVID-19 samples. All tests can be conducted by non-licensed personnel only if they are trained, with proper delegation from and supervision by a medical professional.

Please always check with your testing site organizers, testing lab, and sample collection kit for specific requirements and instructions that may be unique to lab operations or sample collection materials.

Preparing for Testing

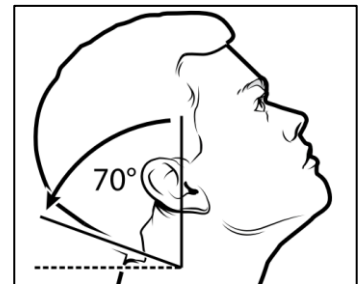
Before collecting any COVID-19 samples, please make sure you:

1. Wash your hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer
2. Wear the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE): for individuals administering the test this includes a gown, gloves, face mask, and a face shield.
3. Assemble needed supplies:
 - a. Swab
 - b. Viral transport medium tube (should contain 1-3 ML of sterile viral transport medium)
 - c. Test sample label with filled out patient information
 - d. Biohazard bag/disposal

Pre-Sample Collection

Once the patient has approached the testing station, please make sure you:

1. Ensure the test sample label has been properly filled out with patient information
2. Ask the patient to use a tissue to gently clean the nasal passage before the test is administered
3. Open the swab container and remove the swab – *careful to not touch the tip to any surface or lay it down*
4. Hold the swab with fingers placed on the score line
5. Ask patient to pull mask down to expose nostrils, but ensure mouth is covered
6. Tilt the patient's head back (70 degrees), and support with your non-dominant hand



Gathering the Sample

Anterior Nares Swab:

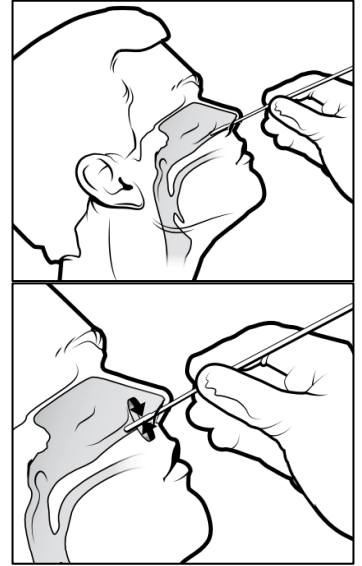
Please follow the below guidelines when gathering an anterior nasal sample:

1. Insert swab at least 1cm inside the nostril
2. Firmly sample by rotating swab around edge of nostril
3. Leave in place for 10 to 15 seconds
4. Repeat on other nostril with same swab

Nasal mid-turbinate (NMT)/Deep Nasal Swab:

Please follow the below guidelines when gathering an NMT or deep nasal sample:

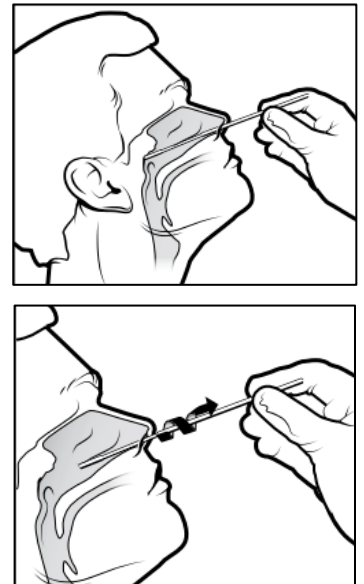
1. While gently rotating the swab, insert less than one inch (about 2cm) into nostril
 - a. Stop when resistance is met at turbinates (nasal bone)
2. Rotate the swab several times against nasal wall
3. Repeat on other nostril with same swab



Nasopharyngeal Swab

Please follow the below guidelines when gathering a nasopharyngeal sample:

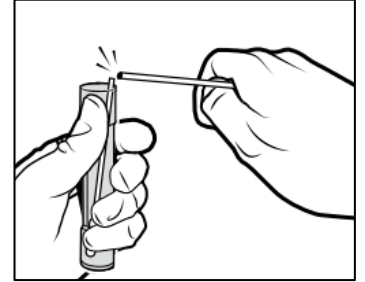
1. Gently insert swab through the nostril **parallel** to the palate until resistance is encountered or the distance is equivalent to that from the ear to the nostril of the patient
 - a. Indicates contact with the nasopharynx
 - b. Swab should reach depth equal to distance from nostrils to outer opening of the ear
 - c. *Note:* insertion of the swab usually induces a cough
2. Gently rub and roll the swab
3. Leave swab in place for several seconds
4. Slowly remove swab while rotating
5. If a deviated septum or blockage creates difficulty in gathering the sample from one nostril, use the same swab to gather the sample from the other nostril



Post-Sample Collection

Once the sample has been collected, please follow the below guidelines:

1. Open the transport vial and place the swab in
2. Snap off swab at the indicator line
3. Replace cap and screw cap on securely
4. Remove and discard gloves
5. Label sample
6. Place into designated cold storage area



Information on Self-Collected Tests

If patients are self-collecting their sample, specific instructions for their reference will be provided with their sample collection device. When patients are self-collecting their swabs under clinical supervision, please follow these guidelines:

1. Hand a swab to the patient only when wearing a clean set of protective gloves
2. The patient can then self-swab and place the swab in the transport media or a sterile transport device and seal
3. If the patient needs assistance, you can help the patient place the swab into the transport media or a transport device and seal it

Additional Information

Additional information can be found on the CDC website, available here: [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for COVID-19](#)