



COVID-19 SWAB COLLECTION: Upper respiratory specimen

This guidance has been prepared by the Public Health Laboratory Network (PHLN). For detailed guidance on specimen collection, see the PHLN guidance on laboratory testing for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) found on the Department of Health website.¹

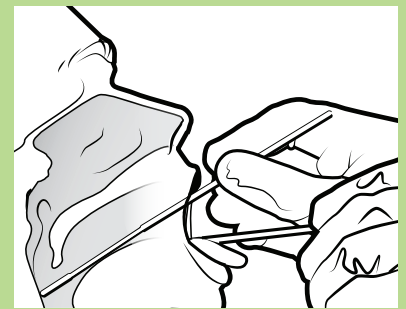
Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for specimen collection can be found in the Infection Control Expert Group's Guidance on use of PPE in non-inpatient healthcare settings, during the COVID-19 outbreak found on the Department of Health website.²

Sampling both sites, deep nasal and oropharynx (throat), is recommended to optimise the chances of virus detection.

1

OROPHARYNGEAL (THROAT) SWAB:

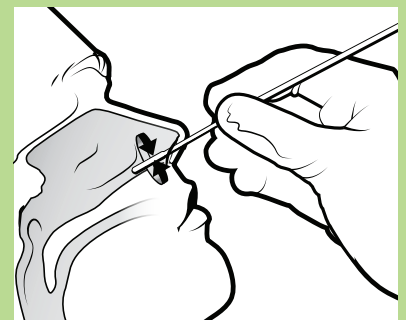
- Swab the tonsillar beds and the back of the throat, while avoiding the tongue.
- To conserve swabs, the same swab can be used for steps 1 and 2.



2

BILATERAL DEEP NASAL SWAB:

- Using a pencil grip and while gently rotating the swab, insert the tip 2-3cm for adults and 1-2cm for children (or until resistance is met), into the nostril, parallel to the palate, to absorb mucoid secretion.
- Rotate the swab several times against the nasal wall.
- Withdraw the swab and repeat the process in the other nostril.



Note: Consideration must be given to the size of the swab being used to collect specimen from children and babies.

Source: Adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ³

Note: PHLN recommend using a combined deep nasal and oropharynx swab, to optimise the chances of virus detection while minimising discomfort for the individual being tested. However, this does not preclude the use of nasopharyngeal swab where the medical practitioner deems appropriate.

3

SEND TO LABORATORY:

- Place the swab(s) back into the accompanying transport medium (unless dry swabs are being used)
- If SARS-CoV-2 testing is to be undertaken in a different laboratory to testing for other respiratory viruses, then the original swab and remaining eluate should be forwarded for SARS-CoV-2 testing.

¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/phln-guidance-on-laboratory-testing-for-sars-cov-2-the-virus-that-causes-covid-19>

² <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-in-non-inpatient-health-care-settings-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/professionals/flu-specimen-collection-poster.pdf>