COVID-19 Testing Specimen Submission Guidelines

Specimen Collection for Molecular Testing

Please review guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure the appropriate infection control precautions are in place **before** collecting any specimens (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-criteria.html).

SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Sequencing Submission Guidelines

Please follow the following criteria to submit SARS-CoV-2 specimens to DC DFS PHL for genomic sequencing:

1. Submit 20% of all positive samples per month, not to exceed 30 samples.
   i. NP/OP/nasal swabs in VTM/UTM are acceptable for submission.
   ii. Saliva, whole blood, plasma, and serum are NOT acceptable specimen types.

2. Only samples with a Ct value of <26 will be acceptable.
   i. If the Ct value is unknown, then we will confirm that it is <26 by re-testing the specimen.

3. Any specimen being sent to DC DFS PHL for genomic sequencing must have the following paperwork accommodating the specimen:
   i. COVID-19 Surveillance COC Form, which can also be found on the DFS PHL website: https://dfs.dc.gov/publication/phl-forms-and-documents
      1. CT value and vaccination status is required for every specimen submitted.
      2. Vaccination status can be filled out under "Comments" section.

4. Please reference the guidelines below for specimen storage conditions, and courier requests.

Acceptable specimen types for collection:

1. Upper Respiratory Specimens

i. **Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab** only in viral transport media (VTM), Universal Transport Media (UTM) or Aptima Specimen Transfer Tube [Cat No. PRD-05110 or 301154C (green label)].

Please see the infographics below for proper Nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen collection.

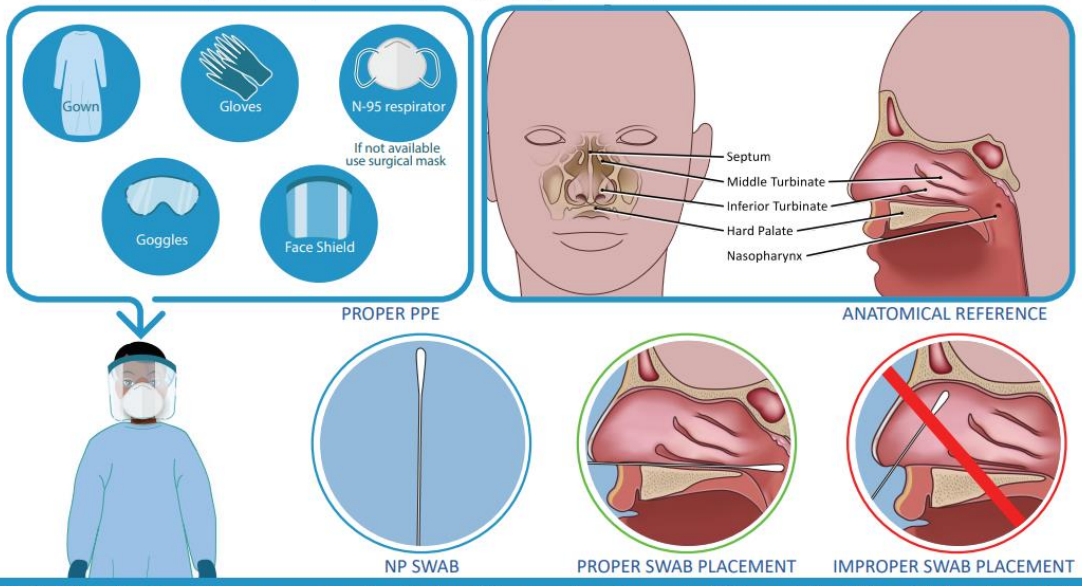
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DFS
DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

NASOPHARYNGEAL (NP) SPECIMEN COLLECTION STEPS

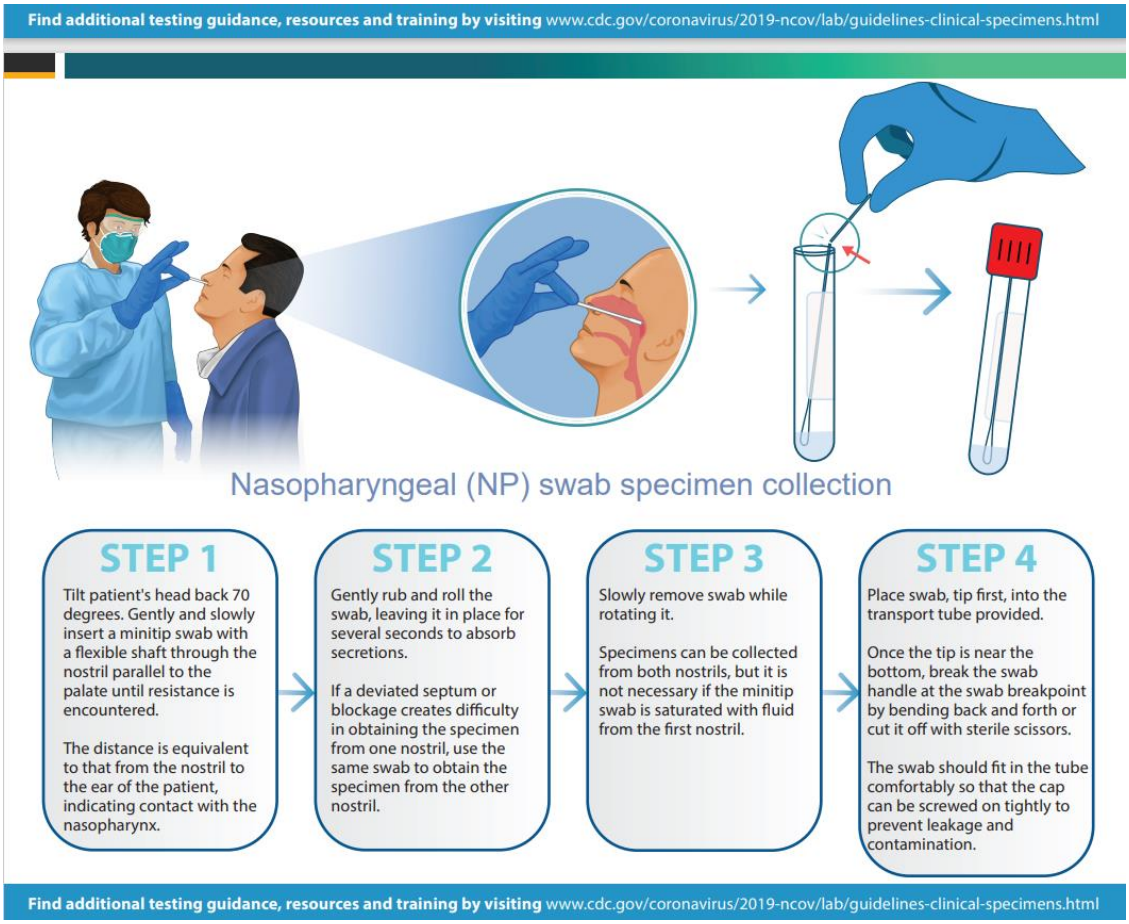
CDC

GENERAL GUIDANCE:

- Ensure that recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn when collecting specimens. This includes gloves, a gown, eye protection (face shield or goggles), and an N-95 or higher-level respirator (or surgical mask if a respirator is not available).
- Gloves must be changed to a new pair for each patient; properly remove old pair and discard into a biohazard waste container.



Find additional testing guidance, resources and training by visiting www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html



Please see the video for additional instructions on NP swab collection:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE

OR

ii. **Oropharyngeal (OP) swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. PRD-03546 (orange label)]

b. *OP specimen:* Insert swab into the posterior pharynx and tonsillar areas. Rub swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx and avoid touching the tongue, teeth, and gums.

OR

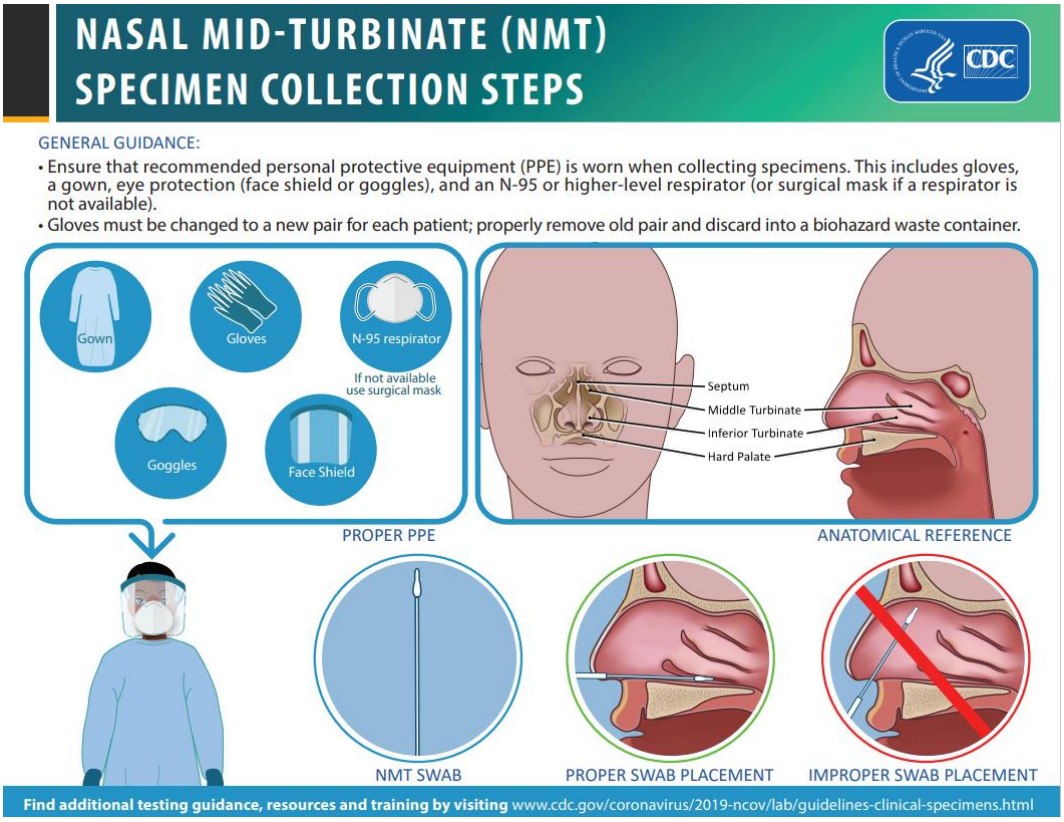
i. **Nasal swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. PRD-03546 (orange label)]

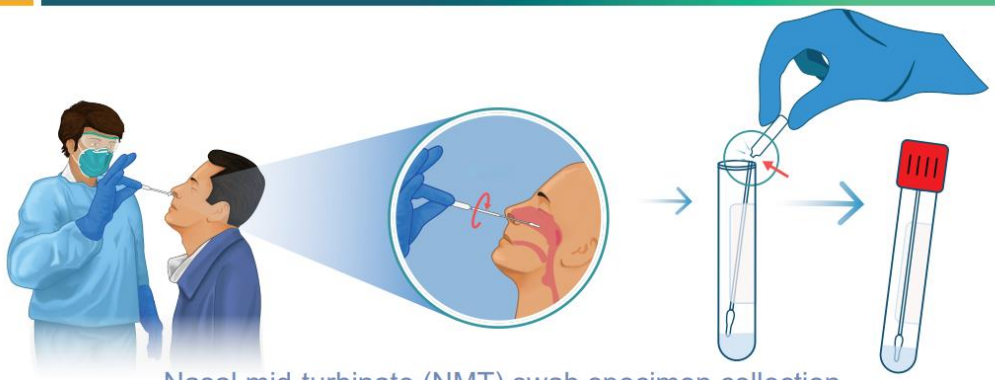
OR

ii. **Healthcare Provider-Observed Self Collected Nasal Swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. PRD-03546 (orange label)]

Note: Self-collection of nasal swabs **MUST** be observed by a healthcare provider and indicated on the test requisition. At-home self collected specimens are not accepted by the DC DFS PHL at this time.

***Please see the infographics below for proper Nasal Mid Turbinate (NMT) specimen collection. Instructions continue next page.**





Nasal mid-turbinate (NMT) swab specimen collection

STEP 1

Tilt patient's head back 70 degrees.

Use a flocked tapered swab.

Some swabs come with a stopper, which indicates proper nasal insertion depth.

STEP 2

While gently rotating the swab, insert it less than one inch (about 2 cm) into nostril parallel to the palate until resistance is met at turbinates.

STEP 3

Rotate the swab several times against nasal wall.

Remove swab, insert it into the other nostril and repeat the process.

STEP 4

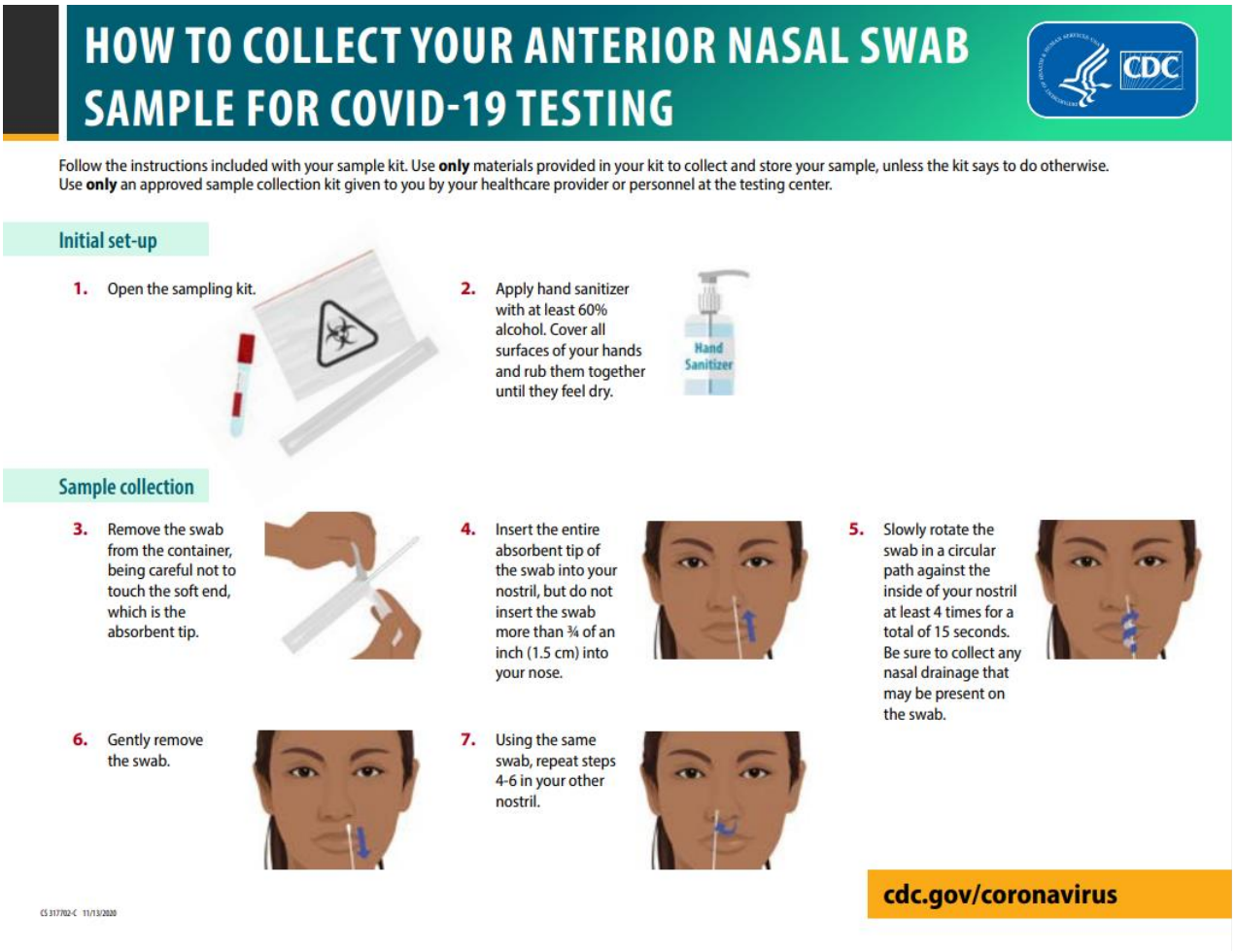
Place swab, tip first, into the transport tube provided.

Once the tip is near the bottom, break the swab handle at the swab breakpoint by bending back and forth or cut it off with sterile scissors.

The swab should fit in the tube comfortably so that the cap can be screwed on tightly to prevent leakage and contamination.

Find additional testing guidance, resources and training by visiting www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html

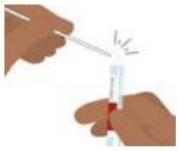
***Please see the infographics below for proper Anterior Nasal specimen collection. Instructions continue next page.**



(Anterior Nasal specimen collection infographics continued)

Preparation of sample for return

8. Place the swab in the sterile tube and snap off the end of the swab at the break line. Place the cap on the tube.



9. Re-apply hand sanitizer.

10. Place the tube containing the swab in the biohazard bag provided and seal the bag.

Returning the sample and clean-up

11. Give the bag with the swab to testing personnel.

12. Throw away the remaining sample kit items.

13. Re-apply hand sanitizer.

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Swab specimens should be collected using only swabs with a synthetic tip, such as nylon or Dacron, and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Calcium alginate swabs are unacceptable and swabs with cotton tips and wooden shafts are not recommended. ESwabs in Amies media are currently not a valid specimen type for COVID-19 testing.

After collecting the specimen, please use scissors to cut the swab so that it can fit inside the transport media tube. Once the swab has been cut, please disinfect the scissors to ensure that there is no cross contamination from one sample to the next. For a list of disinfectants effective in inactivating SARS-CoV-2, please refer to the EPA approved list below. (https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

A health care facility that requires swabs or transport media should contact the DC DFS PHL via email (DFS-COVID19@dc.gov) to request collection supplies. Please indicate how many kits you require in the email. Swabs and transport media should only be used for testing conducted at DFS PHL.

Specimen Storage

All specimens collected for molecular testing must be refrigerated (2-8°C) promptly after collection and couriered/shipped on cold packs within 72 hours. Specimens being held for >72 hours must be stored at -70°C and couriered/shipped on dry ice.

Please do not freeze specimens if courier pick up will occur within 24 hours. It is very important that you contact DFS-COVID19@dc.gov as soon as the specimen is collected so that a courier can be ordered to pick up the specimen.

Paperwork

It is required to sign-up for the APHL LabWebPortal (LWP) prior to any specimens being submitted to DFS PHL. Please sign-up using the following link: https://lwp-web.aimsplatform.com/dc/#/auth/login

Any specimen being sent through the DC DFS PHL must have the following paperwork accommodating the specimen:

1. DC DFS PHL External Chain of Custody (CoC)
2. APHL LWP COVID-19 Test Requisition Form

DFS PHL CoC can be found on DC DFS PHL's website under forms and documents:
https://dfs.dc.gov/publication/phl-forms-and-documents

One LWP test requisition form per sample is required and one chain of custody for each set of 10 specimens is required for testing.

To request integrated paper with labels to print the LWP test request forms please email DFS-COVID19@dc.gov.

Incorrectly labeled requisitions and specimens will result in testing delays. Please ensure there are at least two unique identifiers on the specimen which match the test requisition form.

Courier Request

Once specimens are ready for pick up and the appropriate paperwork is completed, please email DFS-COVID19@dc.gov using the following template to request a courier (see below example on page 4):

- Sample type (NP/OP)
- Storage conditions (refrigerated/frozen)
- Name of Facility
- Address of Facility (including the room number)
- Point of Contact
- Point of Contact Phone Number

If requesting collection kits, Do NOT include patient identifiers in the body of the email.

Example of PHL External Chain of Custody (set of 10 samples)

District of Columbia • Department of Forensic Sciences • Public Health Laboratory
401 E Street SW • 4th Floor • Washington, DC 20024 • Phone (202) 727-8956 • Fax (202) 481-3464
General Laboratory External Chain of Custody
PHL Director: Anthony Tran, DrPH, MPH, D(ABMM)
CLIA#: 09D0968273

Specimen Submitted by:

Hospital/Clinic_____
Point-of-Contact Name_____
Phone_____
Fax_____
E-mail _____
Signature_____
Date_____ **Time**_____

Specimen Received By:

Courier Name_____
Date_____ **Time**_____
Initials_____

Ten (10) specimens can be placed on one external chain of custody

Bronchoalveolar Lavage, Bronchial Wash, Nasopharynx (NP), Oropharynx (OP), Combined NP/OP, Serum, Sputum (expectorated or induced)

Can also be patient first and last name

#	Unique Specimen Identifier (e.g., MRN, sample ID)	Sample type (e.g. serum, tissue, isolate)	Date of Birth	Collection Date	Comments
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

This section is for DC PHL use only

Specimens received by _____ Date/Time_____ Storage Temp_____

Example of Courier Request E-mail Template

Send

To: DFS-COVID19

Cc:

Subject: COVID-19 Specimen Ready-to-Pick up Request

Dear DFS PHL,

I am requesting a courier for 4 specimens to be picked up for SARS-CoV-2 testing.

- Type of specimen (NP/OP): **(4) NP Swabs**
- Address of the facility (including room number): **401 E St SW, Washington, DC, 20024 (Floor 4)**
- Point-of-contact name: **John Doe**
- Point-of-contact phone number: **202-727-8956**
- Storage condition of the specimen (refrigerated/frozen): **Refrigerated**
- Is paperwork complete? **Yes**

Thank you,