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## 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>).

### **I. 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 10% of all positive specimens per week, not to exceed 30 specimens.
  - i. NP/OP/nasal swabs in VTM/UTM or Amies Transport media (ESwab) are acceptable for submission.
  - ii. Only submit Specimens collected within the last 21 days
  - iii. Saliva, whole blood, plasma, and serum are NOT acceptable specimen types.
2. Only specimens with a Ct value of <30 will be acceptable.
  - i. If the Ct value is unknown, then we will confirm that it is <30 by re-testing the specimen.
3. A minimum of 1mL of specimen is required.
4. Any specimen being sent to DC DFS-PHL for genomic sequencing must have the following documentation to accompany the specimen(s):
  - 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>
    - i. Patient demographic information is required for every specimen submitted.
    - ii. CT value, and vaccination status is preferred for every specimen submitted.
    - iii. Input vaccination status under the “Comments” section.
5. Please reference the guidelines below for specimen storage conditions, and courier requests.

### **II. Acceptable Specimen Collection Methods:**

1. 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/or wooden shafts are not recommended. ESwabs in Amies media are currently not a valid specimen type for COVID-19 testing.



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2. After collecting the specimen, if the swab is not scored, please use sterile 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 specimen to the next. For a list of disinfectants effective in inactivating SARS- CoV-2, please refer to the EPA approved list below.
  - i. (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>).
3. A health care facility that requires swabs or transport media should contact the DC DFS-PHL via email ([DFS-COVID19@dc.gov](mailto: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.

### III. Acceptable Upper Respiratory Specimen Types


- i. **Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab** only in viral transport media (VTM), Universal Transport Media (UTM), Amies Transport media (ESwab) or Aptima Specimen Transfer Tube [Cat No. **PRD-05110** or **301154C (green label)**].
  - i. **Please see the video for additional instructions on NP swab collection:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE>
- ii. **Oropharyngeal (OP) swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. PRD-03546 (orange label)]
  - i. *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.
- iii. **Nasal swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. **PRD-03546 (orange label)**].
- iv. **Healthcare Provider-Observed Self Collected Nasal Swab** in VTM, UTM or Aptima Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit [Cat. No. **PRD-03546 (orange label)**].
  - i. **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 PHL at this time.

**Please see the infographics on pages 3-8 for additional instructions on Upper Respiratory Specimen collection:**



Please see the infographics below for proper Nasopharyngeal (NP) Specimen Collection. Instructions continue on the next page.


## NASOPHARYNGEAL (NP) SPECIMEN COLLECTION STEPS



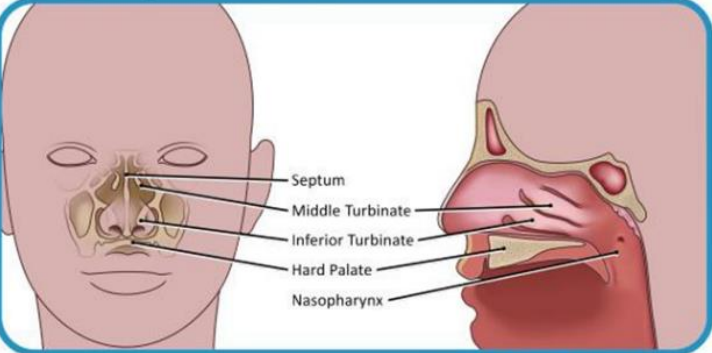
**GENERAL GUIDANCE:**

- 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.


**PROPER PPE**




**ANATOMICAL REFERENCE**



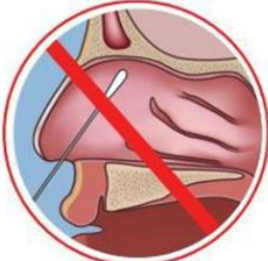
**NP SWAB**



**PROPER SWAB PLACEMENT**



**IMPROPER SWAB PLACEMENT**

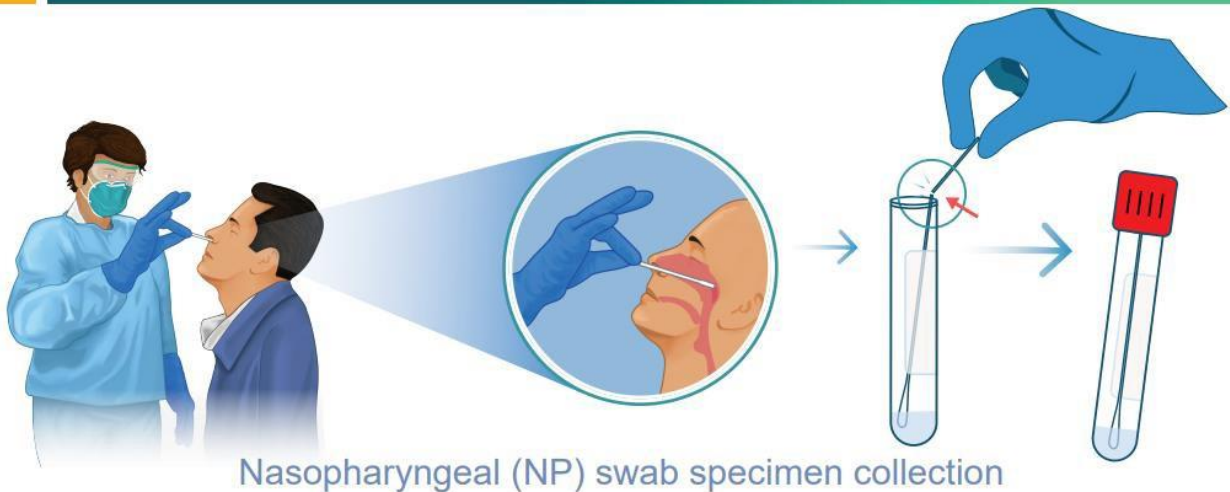


Find additional testing guidance, resources and training by visiting [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html)



## Nasopharyngeal (NP) Specimen Collection infographics (continued)

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



Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab specimen collection

### STEP 1

Tilt patient's head back 70 degrees. Gently and slowly insert a minitip swab with a flexible shaft through the nostril parallel to the palate until resistance is encountered.

The distance is equivalent to that from the nostril to the ear of the patient, indicating contact with the nasopharynx.

### STEP 2

Gently rub and roll the swab, leaving it in place for several seconds to absorb secretions.

If a deviated septum or blockage creates difficulty in obtaining the specimen from one nostril, use the same swab to obtain the specimen from the other nostril.

### STEP 3

Slowly remove swab while rotating it.

Specimens can be collected from both nostrils, but it is not necessary if the minitip swab is saturated with fluid from the first nostril.

### 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](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html)



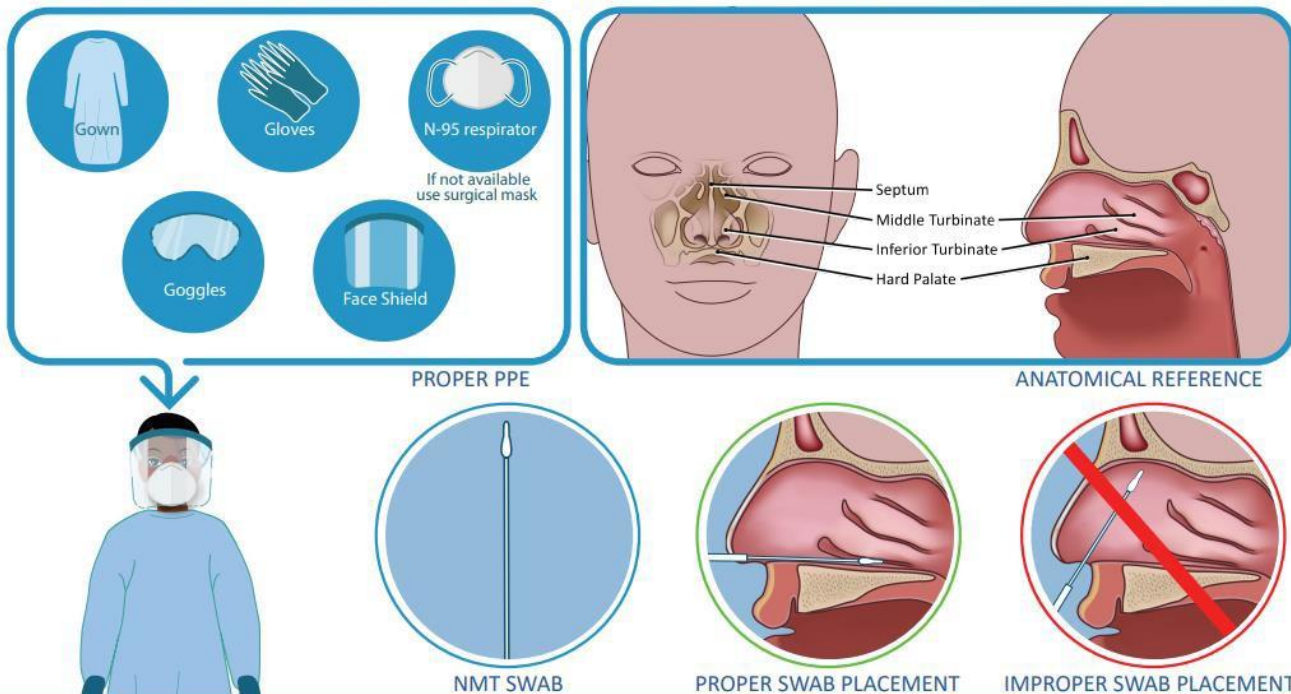
Please see the infographics below for proper Nasal Mid Turbinate (NMT) Specimen Collection. Instructions continue on the next page.

## NASAL MID-TURBINATE (NMT) SPECIMEN COLLECTION STEPS



### GENERAL GUIDANCE:

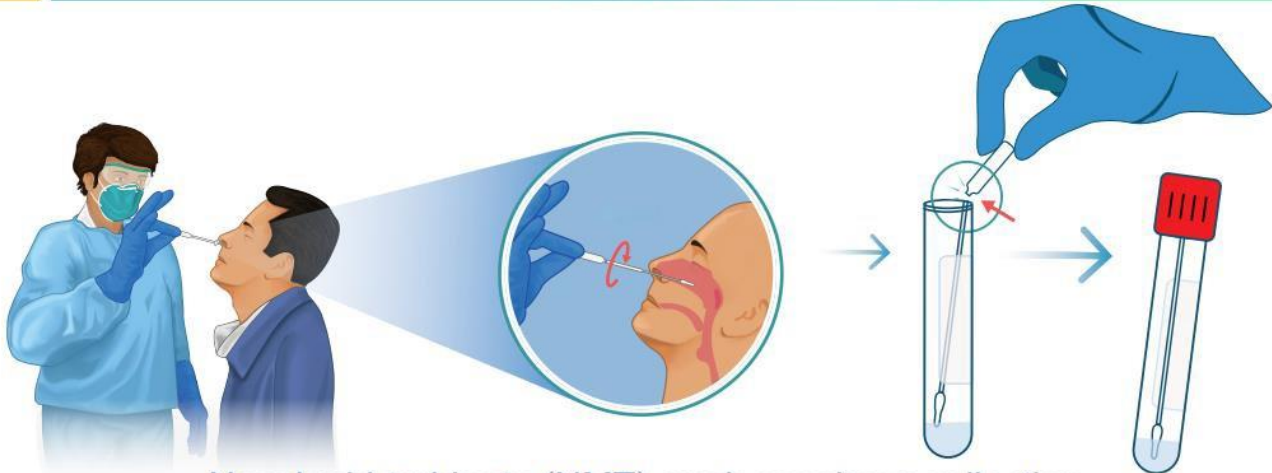
- Ensure that recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn when collecting specimens. This includes gloves, a gown, eye protection (face shield or goggles), and an N-95 or higher-level respirator (or surgical mask if a respirator is not available).
- Gloves must be changed to a new pair for 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](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html)



## Nasal Mid Turbinate (NMT) Specimen Collection infographics (continued)



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](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html)

Please see the infographics below for proper Anterior Nasal Specimen Collection.  
Instructions continue on the next page.

## HOW TO COLLECT YOUR ANTERIOR NASAL SWAB SAMPLE FOR COVID-19 TESTING



Follow the instructions included with your sample kit. Use **only** materials provided in your kit to collect and store your sample, unless the kit says to do otherwise. Use **only** an approved sample collection kit given to you by your healthcare provider or personnel at the testing center.

### Initial set-up

1. Open the sampling kit.



2. Apply hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.



### Sample collection

3. Remove the swab from the container, being careful not to touch the soft end, which is the absorbent tip.



4. Insert the entire absorbent tip of the swab into your nostril, but do not insert the swab more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch (1.5 cm) into your nose.



5. Slowly rotate the swab in a circular path against the inside of your nostril at least 4 times for a total of 15 seconds. Be sure to collect any nasal drainage that may be present on the swab.



6. Gently remove the swab.



7. Using the same swab, repeat steps 4-6 in your other nostril.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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## Anterior Nasal Specimen Collection infographics (continued)

### Preparation of sample for return

8. Place the swab in the sterile tube, if swab is not scored, please use scissors to cut the swab so that it can fit inside the transport media tube. 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.



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#### IV. Specimen Storage

1. **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.
2. **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](mailto:DFS-COVID19@dc.gov) as soon as the specimen is collected so that a courier can be ordered to pick up the specimen.

#### V. Documentation and Submissions

1. **Order all specimen through LabOnline.**
2. Please login to your account using the following link: <https://phl-labonline.dc.gov/Account/SignIn>.
3. It is required to complete the DC DFS-PH LabOnline User Agreement and Client Request Form prior to receiving access to LabOnline.
  - i. It can be found on the DC DFS-PHL website under forms and documents: [PHL Forms and Documents | dfs \(dc.gov\)](#)
4. Use the Ship to Lab feature on LabOnline for all specimens that are sent to the DC DFS-PHL
  - i. For assistance in this process, please refer to the LabOnline User Manual or reach out to the LabOnline User Help Desk: [DFS-LabOnline@dc.gov](mailto:DFS-LabOnline@dc.gov)
5. Any specimen being sent to the DC DFS-PHL must have a Shipping Manifest/Chain of Custody corresponding to the specimens being sent. This document is obtained from LabOnline.
  - i. For assistance in this process, please refer to the LabOnline User Manual or reach out to the LabOnline User Help Desk: [DFS-LabOnline@dc.gov](mailto:DFS-LabOnline@dc.gov)
  - ii. Ensure you print your name, sign, and date at the bottom of the Chain of Custody where indicated.
  - iii. The Chain of Custody should be placed outside the secondary packaging (plastic biohazard bag).
6. Incorrectly labeled specimens will result in testing delays. Ensure that there are at least two unique identifiers on the specimen which match the test requisition.
  - i. To request label paper to print the specimen labels please email: [DFS-COVID19@dc.gov](mailto:DFS-COVID19@dc.gov)



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## VI. Courier Request

1. Once specimens are ready for pick up and the appropriate documentation is completed, please email: [DFS-COVID19@dc.gov](mailto:DFS-COVID19@dc.gov).
2. Use the following template to request a courier:
  - i. Quantity of Specimen being picked up
  - ii. Specimen type (NP/OP)
  - iii. Storage conditions (refrigerated/frozen)
  - iv. Name of Facility
  - v. Address of Facility (including the room number)
  - vi. Point of Contact
  - vii. Point of Contact Phone Number
3. If requesting collection kits, Do NOT include patient identifiers in the body of the email.