

COVID-19 Specimen Collection for Point Prevalence Survey (PPS)

COVID-19 PPS TOOLKIT FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Specimen Collection During a PPS

Clinical staff should wear an N95 respirator, if available, or a medical-grade face mask, eye protection, gloves, and a gown during specimen collection. Staff should change gloves and perform hand hygiene between residents. If it is necessary to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE), staff may wear the same gown unless the gown becomes soiled. If respirator supplies are limited, respirators should be prioritized for other procedures with higher risk for producing infectious aerosols (e.g., CPR). See additional information on PPE and infection prevention and control in “PPE and Hand Hygiene for Point Prevalence Survey (PPS)” at [Long-term Care Testing: COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltctesting.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltctesting.html>).

Health care providers and other medically trained staff (e.g., RN, NA, LPN) can collect specimens for COVID-19 testing. Staff should be trained, and competency evaluated by, an RN or other(?) health care provider. Specimen collection and training should be conducted in accordance with [CDC: Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>).

Upper Respiratory Tract Specimen Collection

Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic or wire shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing.

CDC recommends collecting and testing an upper respiratory specimen for RT-PCR testing. The following are acceptable specimens:

- A nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen collected by a health care provider; or
- An oropharyngeal (OP) specimen collected by a health care provider; or
- A nasal mid-turbinate swab collected by a health care provider or by a supervised on-site self-collection (using a flocked tapered swab); or

- An anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collected by a health care provider or by on-site or home self-collection (using a flocked or spun polyester swab); or
- Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal wash/aspirate (NW) specimen collected by a health care provider.

Nasopharyngeal swab

Insert mini-tip swab with a flexible shaft (wire or plastic) through the nostril parallel to the palate (not upwards) until resistance is encountered or the distance is equivalent to that from the ear to the nostril of the patient, indicating contact with the nasopharynx. Gently rub and roll the swab. Leave swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. Specimens can be collected from both nostrils using the same swab, but it is not necessary to collect specimens from both sides if the mini-tip is saturated with fluid from the first collection. 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.

Oropharyngeal (throat) swab

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.

Nasal mid-turbinate (NMT) swab, also called “Deep Nasal Swab”

Use a flocked tapered swab. Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees. While gently rotating the swab, insert swab less than one inch (about 2 cm) into nostril (until resistance is met at turbinates). Rotate the swab several times against nasal wall and repeat in other nostril using the same swab.

Anterior nares specimen

Using a flocked or spun polyester swab, insert the swab at least 1 cm (0.5 inch) inside the nostril (naris) and firmly sample the nasal membrane by rotating the swab three times and leaving in place for 10 to 15 seconds. Sample both nostrils with same swab.

Resources

[CDC: Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html#collecting)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html#collecting>)

[Washington State Department of Health: Swab Instructions: Self-swab nasal specimen collection](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Self-SwabNasalCollectionInstructions.pdf)
(<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Self-SwabNasalCollectionInstructions.pdf>)

[Washington State Department of Health: Swab Instructions: Mid-turbinate self-swab nasal specimen collection](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Self-SwabMid-turbinateCollectionInstructions.pdf)
(<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Self-SwabMid-turbinateCollectionInstructions.pdf>)



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