



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Commissioner

Nasal Swab and Saliva Collection Guidance

Nasal Swab:

- Insert the nasal swab 1–1.5 cm into a nostril (anterior nares). Rotate the swab against the inside of the nostril for 10-15 seconds while applying pressure to the outside of the nostril. Repeat on the other nostril with the same swab, using external pressure on the outside of the other nostril¹.
- **NOTE:** To avoid specimen contamination, do not touch the swab tip to anything other than the inside of the nostril.
- For nasal swabs, flocked swabs are preferred as they provide better specimen recovery. Sterile dacron or rayon swabs with plastic or flexible metal handles are also acceptable. DO NOT use cotton or calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden sticks. These swabs may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR².
- Remove swab from nostril and place the swab into the tube containing 3 ml of viral transport media. Break the swab at the noted break line and cap the tube tightly.

Saliva:

- The patient should not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum tobacco for 30 minutes prior to collection.
- Healthcare personnel should instruct the patient to spit at least 3ml of saliva into an empty sterile container. This may be a vial, tube or cup that can be closed securely and tightly³.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Requirements for Healthcare Workers Observing Patient

Self-Collection

- Healthcare workers observing the collection of the nasal swab should observe from a safe distance of 6 feet away or further.
- The healthcare worker observing the collection should wear a facemask and gloves as well as eye protection, if available (e.g., face shield and goggles).
- Specimen collection should be performed in a normal examination room with the door closed³.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 22 May 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>. Accessed 23 June 2020.
2. NYSDOH Wadsworth Center. NYS Department of Health. 1 April 2020. https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/04/doh_covid19_guidespecimencollection_040120.pdf. Accessed 14 April 2020.
3. NYS Department of Health. 26 March 2020. https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/nysdoh_hcp_webinar_32620.pdf. Accessed 14 April 2020.

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