

Acceptable Swab Types for COVID Testing

Nasopharyngeal and throat swabs are the preferred specimens for COVID-19 testing and have equivalent sensitivity. Due to shortages of standard collection kits, available swabs and collection containers vary at patient testing locations.

Other acceptable specimen types for COVID-19 and other respiratory virus testing include: nasopharyngeal aspirate, endotracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL), and bronchial washes.

Acceptable Collection Kits for Nasopharyngeal Collection (Only)

NP swab + Viral Transport Medium(VTM) aka Universal Transport Medium (UTM)



Minitip Swab™ + eSwab™ Media



Note: Different manufacturers will be distributed (eg. Copan or Oxoid M4RT)

NP Swab + Sterile Saline



Note: The NP swab and tube used for sterile saline transport medium will change depending on available supplies. Regardless of tube appearance, tubes will be labelled as 0.85% saline with an expiration date.

Acceptable Swabs for Throat*

Swab™ + eSwab™ Media



Throat Swab + Sterile Saline OR UTM/VTM



Note: The throat swab and tube used for the sterile saline transport medium will change depending on available supplies. Regardless of tube appearance, tubes will be labelled as 0.85% saline with an expiration date.

Note: Hologic Aptima® Multitest Swab Kit and Hologic Aptima® Unisex Swab Kit were previously used for COVID testing. Due to shortages, these swab kits should be RESERVED for STI testing and no longer be used for COVID testing

* If throat swabs are not possible, the same swabs can be used as deep nasal swabs (single swab used to sample both sides). However, throat swabs are preferred.

Acceptable Swabs for Nasopharynx or Throat*

Kits with both Throat and NP Swabs + Universal/Viral Transport Medium (UTM/VTM)

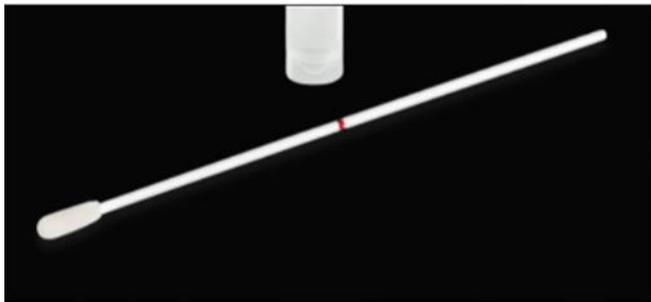


Note: Tube appearance may differ based on available supplies, but all will be labelled as Universal or Viral Transport Media, with an expiration date.

Differences between throat and NP swabs:

- Throat swabs usually have a straight shaft of uniform thickness with a thicker head than an NP swab. Example seen below on the LEFT.
- NP swabs are thick at the base (where you hold the swab) with a narrower flexible portion attached to the swab head. The head of the swab is thinner than a throat swab. Example seen below on the RIGHT.

Throat Swab



NP Swab



Laboratory Bulletins:

- [Collection of a Nasopharyngeal and Throat Swab for Detection of Respiratory Infection \(2020-05\)](#)
- [Throat Collection Instructions for Respiratory Viruses using Saline Transport Medium \(2020-05\)](#)
- [Instructional Video on Collection, Breaking of Swab Shaft and Specimen Submission \(2020-05-15\)](#)
- [Interim Recommendations for COVID-19 Sample Collection \(2020-03-19\)](#)
- [Major Changes in COVID-19 Specimen Collection Recommendations \(2020-04-11\)](#)
- [Change from Nasopharyngeal to Throat Swab for COVID-19 and RPP Testing \(2020-04-15\)](#)
- [New Collection Kit for COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Testing \(2020-04-29\)](#)
- [Requisitions & Instructions for Ordering Asymptomatic COVI-19 Testing \(2020-06-05\)](#)