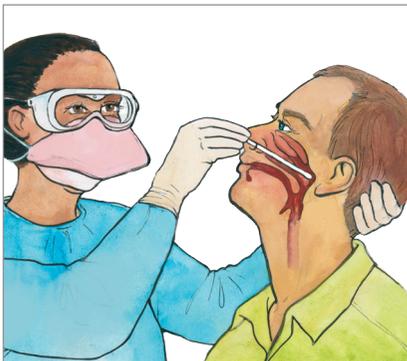


# How to test for COVID-19

- A patient with suspected COVID-19 needs testing for the virus SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease COVID-19.
- Take one upper respiratory specimen: a nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, mid-turbinate or nasal sample. Sampling can be done at any time of day.
- Before starting:
  - Perform hand hygiene and put on PPE safely.
  - Explain procedure to patient and that s/he may feel some discomfort for a short time.
  - Open a sterile flocked swab with a plastic shaft.

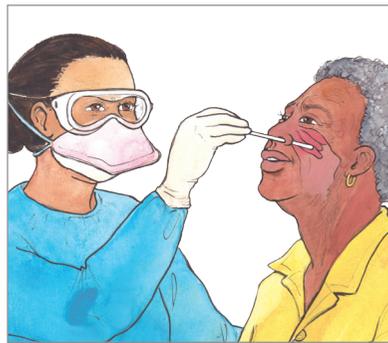
## If taking nasopharyngeal specimen:

- Ask patient to tilt head back.
- Holding swab like a pen, insert swab into nostril and carefully advance swab backwards (not upwards), until you feel resistance at posterior nasopharynx (about 5-6cm). If resistance felt sooner, try other nostril.
- Gently rotate swab 2-3 times and hold in place for 2-3 seconds, then withdraw from nostril.



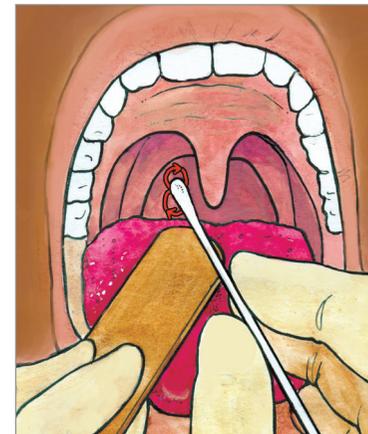
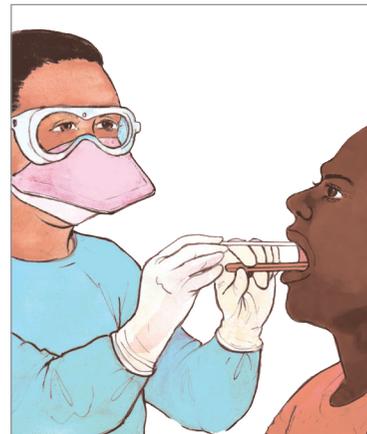
## If taking mid-turbinate specimen:

- Ask the patient to tilt head back.
- Gently insert swab into nostril until you feel resistance at turbinates (about 2 cm).
- Gently rotate swab several times against nasal wall.
- Repeat in other nostril using same swab.



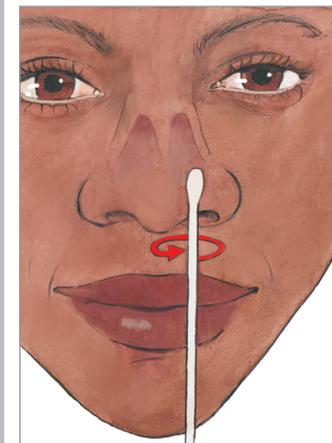
## If taking oropharyngeal specimen:

- Ask patient to tilt head back and open mouth.
- Hold tongue down with tongue depressor.
- Ask patient to say "aahh" to elevate the uvula.
- Swab each tonsil first, then swab posterior pharynx using figure of 8 movement.
- Avoid swabbing the soft palate or the tongue as this can cause a gag reflex.



## If taking nasal specimen:

- Gently insert swab into nostril (about 1 cm).
- Firmly rotate swab against nasal wall and leave it in place for 10-15 seconds.
- Repeat in other nostril using same swab.



- Break off the swab shaft at the break point and place it into universal transport medium (UTM) tube. Tightly close tube and place in plastic bag. Ensure sample is kept between 2-8°C until processed at laboratory.
  - If no UTM available and specimen will reach laboratory within 2 days, send dry swab at room temperature.
  - If no UTM available and will reach laboratory after 2 days, use normal saline instead.
- Remove PPE safely and wash hands thoroughly.
- Complete NHLS request form to send with specimen. Fill in 'SARS-COV-2 testing (PCR)' under other tests (all disciplines) section. Record correct contact details and alternative number.