



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

COVID-19: Viral Testing Guidelines for British Columbia

June 18, 2020 – For Healthcare Providers

Guidelines for COVID-19 testing in BC are periodically reviewed and updated based on COVID-19 epidemiology, seasonality, public health measures in place, testing capacity, and our evolving understanding of test performance in clinical settings. As a result, BC guidelines may differ from other national or provincial guidelines.

At this time in BC, there are low levels of community transmission of COVID-19. As BC society continues to re-open, and there are changes in the level of interactions between people in the population, early detection and management of COVID-19 cases and their contacts is a critical public health strategy for maintaining low levels of transmission in BC. There is also capacity to expand testing beyond current levels.

Accordingly, at this time providers are recommended to have a low threshold for testing symptomatic individuals for COVID-19 infection.

Guidance for COVID-19 Testing by Nucleic Acid Tests (NATs)

1. Test all individuals with new symptoms compatible with COVID-19, however mild.

The symptoms most commonly found with COVID-19 infection include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough*
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Muscle aches

*Or exacerbation of chronic cough.

Less common symptoms of COVID-19 infection include stuffy nose, conjunctivitis (pink eye), dizziness, confusion, abdominal pain, and skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes.

Clinical judgement remains important in the differential diagnosis and work-up of individuals presenting with these symptoms (e.g., people with allergies). For more information on the diagnosis and management of COVID-19 infection, please refer to the [clinical guidelines](#) on the BCCDC website.



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.

Non-medical inquiries (ex. travel, physical distancing): 1-888-COVID19 (1888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300



2. It is particularly important to test symptomatic individuals who:

- Are residents or staff of long-term care facilities
- Require admission to hospital or are likely to be admitted
- Are healthcare workers
- Are contacts of a known case of COVID-19
- Are travellers who in the past 14 days returned to BC from outside Canada, or from an area with higher infection rates within Canada
- Are residents of remote, isolated, or Indigenous communities
- Live in congregate settings such as work-camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors' residences
- Are homeless or have unstable housing
- Are essential service providers, such as first responders.

3. COVID-19 testing is not recommended for asymptomatic individuals.

Routine COVID-19 screening of asymptomatic people is not recommended in BC (e.g., in schools, prior to surgery or other procedures, in hospitals or healthcare settings, as a condition of employment or for travel).

4. Medical Health Officers may recommend testing as part of public health investigations.

Medical Health Officers may recommend testing for individuals who are part of a public health investigation of a case, cluster or an outbreak, regardless of symptom profile.

Note: In May the Provincial Health Officer [temporarily removed](#) the requirement for licensed practical nurses to have a client-specific order prior to performing nasopharyngeal swabs if being done as part of a screening program approved by a Medical Health Officer.

Guidance on Specimen Collection and Labelling

Specimen Collection

Collect a **Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab** using the instructions provided in this video "How to perform a nasopharyngeal swab". Note the instructions for donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE).

<https://youtu.be/f0xSKPm8IKA> (produced by UBC ENT and Providence Healthcare)

Use the swab/collection device provided by your institution. The following swabs are currently validated and are available for use in BC:

- Copan UTM Viral transport media– Red top
- Copan UTM Viral transport media– Blue top**
- VWR Starplex Multitran Collector
- EZPro Swab-RT UTM transport media with Nasopharyngeal Swab (ESBE kit)
- Hologic Aptima Unisex Swab Specimen Collection Kit**
- DO NOT use the orange packaged Hologic Aptima Multitest swabs for NP collection

For hospitalized patients and/or patients with evidence of lower respiratory tract disease, collect a lower respiratory tract sample (e.g., sputum, endotracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage, etc.) in a sterile screw-top container **in addition to a nasopharyngeal swab**.



**Use with care when inserting into the nasopharyngeal cavity, as these swabs may cause mild trauma. Gently insert only as far as possible, and avoid forcing against resistance. Inserting approximately 2-3 cm will allow swabbing of the mid-turbinate area. In this case, swab bilateral mid-turbinate using a single swab to optimize sampling quality.

Specimen Labelling

All specimens (cylindrical tube) must have an attached label with:

- Patient name
- PHN or Date of Birth (DOB)
- Specimen type (e.g., NP swab)
- Date & time of collection

Please add one of the following codes to the specimen label:

- **HCW1** – Health Care Worker – Direct Care
- **HCW2** – Health Care Worker – Non Direct Care
- **LTC** – Long Term Care Facility
- **OBK** – Outbreaks, clusters or case contacts
- **HOS** – Hospitalized
- **CMM** – Community or Outpatient, including Urgent and Primary Care Centres
- **CGT** – People living in congregate settings such as work-camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors' residences.
- **TRE** – Tree planters

Please submit each specimen in an individual, sealed biohazard bag. Include a paper requisition which clearly states the patient information, the ordering physician, and the test name (COVID-19 NAT).

Please refer to the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory eLab Handbook under COVID-19 test for specimen requirements.

<http://www.elabhandbook.info/phsa/>

Paper Requisitions are available here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Forms/Labs/VI%20Req.pdf>

June 10, 2020
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