



COVID-19 Testing recommendations – Whitehorse and rural Yukon 2022-11-10

COVID-19 is present throughout Whitehorse, rural communities and across Canada. While adherence to public health measures and vaccination help to reduce the spread and severity of disease, symptomatic testing plays a role in early detection and clinical management. As cases continue, the priority for lab-based PCR testing may be reserved for situations where there is highest risk to individual or public health outcomes. Clinic or lab-based NAAT testing (i.e. Abbott ID NOW) may also be used upon direction by MOH/YCDC within this criteria as a part of surge or outbreak approaches depending on the clinical context.

The most commonly found COVID-19 symptoms include:

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

*or acute exacerbation of a chronic cough. Less common symptoms of COVID-19 infection may include: stuffy nose, conjunctivitis, dizziness, confusion, abdominal pain, skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes.

Testing recommendations:

1. Test individuals who are symptomatic (as above) for whom it is clinically warranted (for example, at higher risk of severe illness or who may benefit from treatments, such as Paxlovid and remdesivir) upon healthcare provider assessment. Please note that widespread testing for the general public without clinical indication is no longer recommended at this time.
2. Routine asymptomatic testing is NOT recommended from a public health standpoint (for example, as a part of pre-surgical screening).

Please note: Testing is NOT recommended for recently recovered COVID-19 cases in the first 45 days following initial positive lab test nor asymptomatic individuals unless directed by YCDC/MOH

COVID-19 is part of a differential diagnosis and clinical judgment is important in the work up of individuals presenting with these symptoms. Please remember to consider other possible diagnoses in the evaluation of the patient. All symptomatic patients who are tested for COVID-19 are recommended to self-isolate regardless of the outcome of the test.

Immediate management of all persons tested:

- ✓ Recommend patient to self-isolate and provide standardized information sheet (step 3).
- ✓ Inform them they can access their test results online at <https://yukon.ca/en/find-out-what-your-covid-19-test-results-mean>
- ✓ Report. All persons investigated must be reported by fax to YCDC. Fax COVID reporting form or outpatient assessment form including current phone number to YCDC 667-8349 (step 4).

Monday to Friday 8:30-4:30: YCDC 667-8323 or 667-5080

Types of PCR testing:

There are two streams of PCR testing available in the Yukon: NP swabs, and saline gargle tests.

Saline gargle is only to be used when the patient meets all of the following criteria:

- The patient is a school aged child (generally 5-18 years of age); AND
- The client is being tested as an outpatient
- The patient does not require testing for other respiratory viruses (ie. Influenza and RSV), as COVID-19 is the only test that will be run on the saline gargle sample

Saline gargle tests are NOT to be used for hospitalized or possibly hospitalized patients. All hospitalized or possibly

hospitalized patients should have an NP swab for COVID-19 and testing for influenza / RSV. For hospitalized patients with evidence of lower respiratory tract disease, a lower respiratory tract sample (e.g. sputum, endotracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage, etc.) continues to be recommended.

How to test:

1.) Specimen collection:

If collecting NP swab:

[Collect specimen](#), complete the [BCCDC PHL virology requisition](#), select COVID-19 in the respiratory pathogen list and note NP as sample site.

- Use the viral collection kit
- Confirm expiry date on viral medium and **ensure specimen arrives at BCCDC lab within 5 days from collection date, prior to specimen collection**



Notes about specimens:

- In the outpatient setting, collect 1 Nasopharyngeal swab (NP)
- Patients with severe respiratory illness or hospitalized patients should have multiple samples collected: an NP and a throat swab or sputum, endo tracheal aspirate, or bronchoalveolar lavage
- **As of December 6, 2021, Hologic Aptima swabs are no longer accepted for viral respiratory pathogen tests, including COVID-19**

If collecting saline gargle test:

[Collect specimen](#), complete the BCCDC PHL [requisition](#), choosing saline gargle as “container type”

- Use the collection device and saline identified
- Ensure all saline has descended into the collection tube (e.g. by tapping the tube)
- Remove the funnel and replace it with a screw on lid ensuring a tight seal

Notes about specimens:

- See *Yukon Saline Gargle Specimen Collection Procedure* for detailed information.
- If collection tube contains less than 1mL of saline, reject sample and perform an NP swab
- If the initial saline gargle collection was not successful (e.g. swallow saline or spit out saline), re-collection should not be attempted and an NP swab should be collected.



ALERT: Sample must arrive at BCCDC Laboratory no more than 4 days from time of collection

2.) Isolation of the client:

- All symptomatic persons tested for COVID-19 should be isolated. Patients requiring hospitalization should be placed in a separate room on contact and droplet precautions. Patients well enough to go home must be provided education and recommended to isolate at home. Provide the handout on self-isolation ([Information about the novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Self-isolating at home](#)).
- Individuals tested for COVID-19 are to access their results online: <https://yukon.ca/en/find-out-what-your-covid-19-test-results-mean>.

3.) Notify YCDC of all persons tested for COVID-19:

- HCPs should assess for isolation feasibility at point of testing including referral to self-isolation facilities as required if available. Self-isolation facilities will close on December 16, 2022. Home isolation is critical to controlling community spread of this virus.

For more information:

Yukon health care provider guidance documents, including patient handouts are found at: <https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/health-concerns-diseases-and-conditions/find-information-health-professionals>

Public information is available at: <https://yukon.ca/covid-19>