



2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Saline Gargle Specimen Collection Procedure

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Saline Gargle Specimen Collection Procedure

Saline (salt water) gargle is an approved alternative to NP swab collection for outpatient, school-aged children and youth (grades K-12) who are able to follow instructions on how to swish, gargle and spit a small amount of saline.

Most children 5 years of age and older are able to provide a saline gargle sample with some guidance.

Children and their families should watch the recommended video regarding saline gargle sample collection, located at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvqjkbD-moA&feature=youtu.be>. The video should be reviewed and the method practiced at least two hours before going to a facility for this test.

Please ensure that the child has not eaten, had anything to drink, smoked, used a vape or chewed gum for one hour before sample collection.

Use the collection device and saline identified. The collection system is sterile and consists of a funnel attached to a 10mL collection tube with cap and 5mL of sterile saline. See Yukon Gargle – outpatient testing – Whitehorse and Rural Yukon testing recommendations available at: <https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/health-concerns-diseases-and-conditions/find-information-health-professionals>



Saline gargle should not be used for persons who will/may be admitted to the hospital. All hospitalized or possible hospitalized testing should have a NP swab for COVID which includes testing for influenza. 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.

Preparation for the procedure

Have families watch the video for sample collection. COVID-19 saline gargle collection in school-aged children: A video for families <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvqjkbD-moA&feature=youtu.be>

Take measures to put the child and caregiver at ease prior to the specimen collection. This form of sample collection could be performed in a vehicle or similar non-clinical setting. Ideally they

should be familiar with the sample collection process by having viewed the instructional video in advance.

- Approach the child in a gentle, friendly and age-appropriate way. Introduce yourself.
- Provide an explanation for your PPE (Explaining PPE to Children) Video available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNinywG7BtY>
- Prior to the procedure, tell the child and caregiver what you need to do in simple terms and answer any questions.

Procedure

Saline gargle is recommended for children and youth from kindergarten to grade 12 (typically ages 5 through 18) who are able to swish, gargle and spit into a funnel. Some children may not be able to provide this sample type (e.g. those with neurocognitive or motor disabilities). In these scenarios a nasopharyngeal swab will be required.

- Provide procedural mask(s) to child/youth and caregiver for donning prior to HCP/client interaction
- Perform hand hygiene.
- Don PPE (gloves, gown, procedural mask and eye protection).
- For younger children who may require more assistance from their parents (generally those between 4 and 10 years of age), provide the saline gargle collection kit and instructions for younger children, available here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/children-youth>
- Older children and youth (generally those > 10 years of age) may be able to perform the collection without direct parent/caregiver assistance, with the instructions available here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/children-youth>
- Once they are comfortable with the instructions, provide them with a saline gargle collection kit. The collection tube should be labelled with a pre-printed patient label, or ensure there are 3 patient identifiers present (Full legal name, DOB, PHN) on the collection tube. Date and time of collection on the tube are desired but not mandatory.
- After collection is finished, the child/youth or caregiver will hand the collection tube with funnel still attached to the health care worker.
- The health care worker ensures all saline has descended into the collection tube (e.g. by gently tapping the tube).
- If collection tube contains less than 1mL of saline, then *reject sample and perform a NP swab.*

- The health care worker will remove the funnel and replace it with a screw on lid ensuring a tight seal and place in a biohazard bag.
- Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.
- For those who attempt the saline gargle collection but are not successful (e.g. swallow saline or spit out saline), re-collection **should not be attempted** and a nasopharyngeal sample should be collected.

Preparing for Specimen Transport

- Perform hand hygiene and don new gloves.
- Ensure label includes: Patient Identifiers, Ordering provider, Test name, Date/Time of collection and that the identifiers match the specimen label.
- Use codes within labelling section as appropriate.
- Place the specimen container in a biohazard transport bag and insert the appropriate completed virology requisition into the side pouch.
- Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.

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

Specimen Labelling

- If appropriate, specimens (cylindrical tube) should have one of the following codes added to the specimen label to help prioritize results:
 - OBK – Outbreaks, clusters or case contacts
 - CGT – People attending or living in congregate settings such as day cares, camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors' residences.
 - CMM – Community or Outpatient, including Urgent and Primary Care Centres
 - SCHOOL – all persons attending school in-person

The process for receiving results and the turnaround time will be the same as that for a routine NP swab.

Please refer to the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory eLab Handbook under COVID-19 test for specimen requirements or see paper requisitions available at: <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Forms/Labs/VI%20Req.pdf>



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