



**衛生防護中心**  
Centre for Health Protection

**Infection Control Branch**

**Infection Control Advice on Taking Combined Nasal and Throat Swabs to Test for COVID-19 of the Universal Community Testing Programme**

**I. Preamble**

Early detection of COVID-19 is important for control and preventing spread of COVID-19. The Government is going to start a Universal Community Testing Programme (UCT Programme) using combined nasal and throat swabs (CNTS) to test for COVID-19.

**II. Combined Nasal and Throat Swabs**

1. Nasal swab (NS) / Throat swab (TS): to be collected by staff on client at the designated Community Testing Centres.
2. Combined nasal and throat swabs can increase the sensitivity of detecting COVID-19.

**III. Test Arrangement**

- (a) Requirement of a Community Testing Centre
  - i. Has well ventilated room / hall with separate entrance / exit.
  - ii. Has adequate space for storage, client, donning, specimen collecting, doffing and waste disposal.
  - iii. Needs to have toilet with hand washing facilities, shower for emergency and resting area for staff.



- (b) Ventilation: Open the windows as far as feasible. Maximize the fresh air intake of the air-conditioners to enhance the ventilation of the specimen taking room/hall.
  - i. Total air change (Total ACH): at least 6 ACH
  - ii. Fresh air change (Fresh ACH): at least 2 ACH
  - iii. Preferably to have standalone ventilation system or at least not to share ventilation system with those immunocompromised clients
- (c) Thorough environmental cleaning and disinfection of the specimen taking site should be performed with 1 in 49 diluted bleach at the end of each session and when needed. Highly touched areas need to be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
- (d) Disinfect environment contaminated with blood, secretions, vomitus or excreta spillage by 1 in 4 diluted household bleach after wiping away contaminant with strong absorbent disposable towels
- (e) Waste needs to be properly disposed.
- (f) How to collect specimen
  - i. Take NS first. Followed by TS with a separate swab
  - ii. Procedure to collect NS (anterior nares specimen)
    - 1. When taking out the swab from the sterile package, only hold the swab by the handle. Never touch the swab tip.
    - 2. Ask the client to tilt the head back slightly to straighten the nasal passage
    - 3. Gently insert the swab (~1-2 cm for adult) inside the nostril parallel with the nose bridge, or until resistance is felt. Gently rotate the swab and leaving in place for 10 to 15 seconds. Slowly rotate as the swab is withdrawn
    - 4. Sample the other nostril with the same swab.
    - 5. Insert the swab into specimen bottle with transport media and break off the applicator stick.
    - 6. Screw the bottle.
  - iii. Procedure to collect TS
    - 1. Use a new swab.
    - 2. Insert the swab into the posterior pharynx and tonsillar areas.
    - 3. Rub the swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx in an up and down motion several times for both

- sides and avoid touching the tongue, uvula, teeth, gums or lips.
4. Insert the swab into the same specimen bottle with transport media and break off the applicator stick.
  5. Screw the bottle tightly to avoid leakage.
- iv. Send for testing as soon as possible.

#### **IV. Infection Control Advice**

- (a) All clients need to be screened for temperature before entering the specimen taking site. Clients or staff who have fever or respiratory symptoms or recent onset of sudden loss of taste/ smell should not enter the Community Testing Centre and seek medical advice as soon as possible.
- (b) No sharing of items with others unless thorough cleaning and disinfection can be ensured.
- (c) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - i. Swab Taker (PPE to be provided by the Government)
    1. Respirator
    2. Eye protection (goggle/ face shield)
    3. Gown
    4. Disposable gloves
    5. Cap (optional)
  - ii. Recommendation of Minimum PPE for staff with different tasks  
**(Annex I)**
- (d) General Infection Control Advice to Staff
  - i. Put on adequate PPE. When donning and doffing, buddy system needs to be adopted.
  - ii. Change gloves and perform hand hygiene before and after taking specimen for each client.
  - iii. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing with liquid soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly soiled, 70-80% alcohol-based handrub can be used as an alternative.
  - iv. Change other items of PPE when it is visibly contaminated or after each session.
  - v. For donning and doffing of PPE, please refer to the video demonstration at Centre for Health Protection website:  
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/32975.html>

- (e) Infection Control Practice When Taking Specimen
  - i. Only essential staff should be in specimen collection section. Apart from the one responsible for taking specimen, other staff member should keep a distance of at least 2 metres from the client during specimen collection.
  - ii. Advise the client to hold tissue papers for covering his / her mouth and nose in case of sneezing and coughing.
  - iii. Re-useable items must be properly clean and disinfected before removal from this area. Single-use items should be disposed of properly after use.
- (f) Infection Control Advice to Client
  - i. Keep adequate social distancing while waiting
  - ii. Wear surgical mask at all times, except for the moment of swabbing. After swabbing, or in case of sneezing or coughing, he or she should immediately put back the surgical mask. Hand hygiene needs to be performed.

## **V. Specimen Storage**

- (a) Specimens must be transported to laboratory on the same day and as soon as possible.
- (b) Specimens pending for delivery should be stored according to the instruction of the laboratory performing the test.
- (c) Triple package system is required for specimen transport
  - i. A tightly screwed specimen bottle
  - ii. 2 clean sealable plastic specimen bags
  - iii. An outermost transport box that is robust and easy to clean, with lid/cover closed properly and securely during transport.
- (d) Please check the corresponding laboratory for their specific requirement.

## **VI. Transportation of Specimen**

- (a) Transportation will be arranged by the Government

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## Annex I Minimum PPE in Community Testing Centre

Task	Respiratory Protection		Gloves	Eye Protection (Face shield)	Gown	Cap
	Surgical Mask	Respirator				
Administrative Team eg Registration Screening of Temperature	✓	-	-	Optional (Note 1)	-	Optional
Specimen Collection Team	✓ (either one)		✓	✓	✓	Optional
Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	Optional

Note 1: If there is no effective partition between staff and client, and staff is anticipated to be within 1 meter of the client, eye protection is required.