

PCR testing for COVID-19: where to swab?



A swab audit at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) showed that **nasopharynx** is the single sampling source with the highest sensitivity



	Sensitivity ^{**‡} (%)			
	Day of illness < 8	Day of illness ≥ 8	URTI	Pneumonia
Nasopharynx (NP)	95	70	92	70
Oropharynx (OP)	88	67	88	61
Combination of NP and OP ● ●	98	83	96	83
Combination of OP and mid-turbinate nasal (MT) ● ●	98	77	94	78

Scan the QR code for a [video](#) on how to collect a nasopharyngeal swab to test for COVID-19. While the video outlines the general principles, please follow the prevailing guidelines or protocols at your institution.



Marty FM, Chen K, Verrill KA. How to obtain a nasopharyngeal swab specimen. *NEJM*. 2020. DOI:10.1056/NEJMc2010260

PCR, polymerase chain reaction; URTI, upper respiratory tract infection

*Sensitivity refers to the proportion of individuals infected with COVID-19 who are found to have a positive test result

†Specificity: 100%, refers to the proportion of individuals not infected with COVID-19 who are found to have a negative test result

‡Other sampling sources showed lower sensitivity, including MT alone and saliva (alone or in combination with OP or MT)



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This infographic does not replace clinical judgement, and the responsibility for making decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual patient remains at all times with the healthcare professional.