



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	64	92	60
Oropharynx (OP)	88	61	88	52
Combination of NP and OP 	98	76	96	72
Combination of OP and mid-turbinate nasal (MT) 	98	70	94	68

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/NEJMvcm2010260

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% (specificity refers to the proportion of individuals not infected with COVID-19 who are found to have a negative test result)

‡ NP + MT showed similar sensitivity to OP + MT; other sampling sources showed lower sensitivity, including MT alone and saliva (alone or in combination with OP or MT)



National Centre for Infectious Diseases



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