

Guidance on Nasal Swabs For COVID-19 Specimens Sent to LabCorp

LabCorp now accepts patient self-administered nasal swabs for COVID-19 specimen collection. Complete guidance can be found [here](#), and is summarized below:

A nasopharyngeal specimen collected by a health care professional is the preferred sample, but when that is not possible, the following have been deemed acceptable alternatives:

- **An anterior nares specimen** collected by a health care professional or by onsite patient self-collection in the presence and under the supervision of a health care professional.

Anterior nares specimen collection test can be used for:

- symptomatic PUIs
- asymptomatic pre-ops
- asymptomatic return to work patients

Specimen collection should be observed by a health care professional in a closed room. To reduce viral spread, instruct patients to pull down their mask to reveal only the nose (mask should still cover the mouth). Visitors should be asked step out of the room.

Self-collection by the patient is the preferred specimen collection method.

Health care providers observing self-collection of these specimens should stand 6 feet away from the patient and wear the following personal protective equipment (PPE):

- Gloves
- Procedural mask
- Eye protection
- Gown as follows:
 - If asymptomatic pre-op or return-to-work: no gown required
 - If symptomatic PUI: add gown
 - If the patient is a child/dependent adult and unable to perform the self-collection and the health care provider obtains the specimen: add a gown

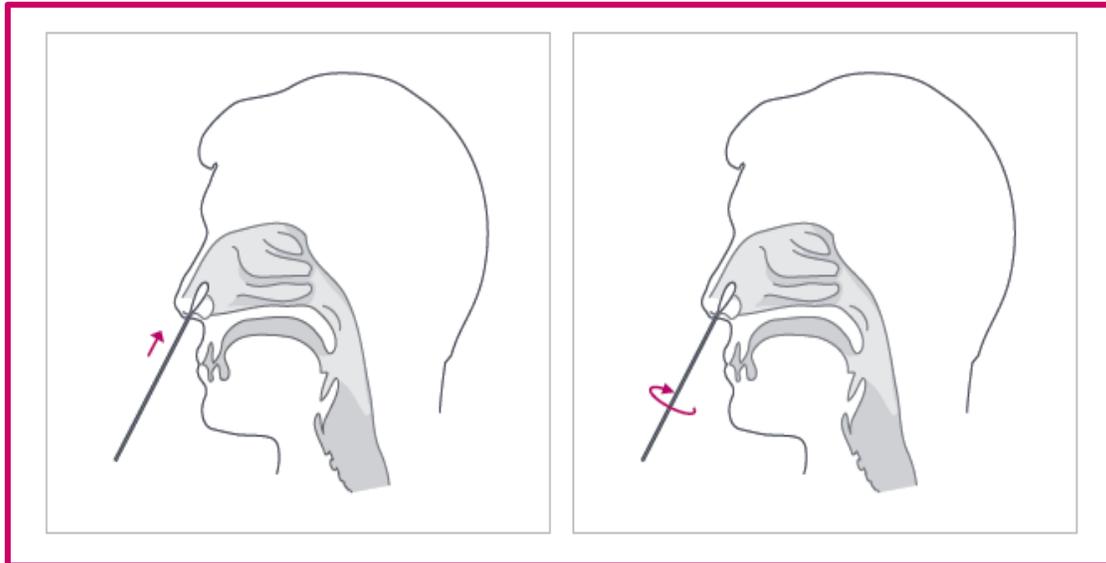
Please also note the following disclaimer from LabCorp regarding false negative rates: Internal collection data has shown that false negative rates are between 1 and 6 percent higher for nasal swabs than nasopharyngeal swabs. Discharge instructions for COVID-19 negative patients include counseling about this risk. If patient's symptoms are not improved in 48-72 hours, consider re-testing.

Caution: Providers sending specimens for testing should be aware of the possible increased risk for false-negative SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid amplification results due to improper collection and/or collection site.



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Patient Instructions for Nasal Swab Collection



1. Lower your mask to below your nose (mask should still cover the mouth).
2. If copious nasal drainage is present, blow nose into tissue prior to sample collection.
3. Insert swab into nostril approximately 1 inch.
4. Gently rotate the swab several times against the nasal wall then slowly remove from the nostril.
5. Using the same swab, **repeat sample collection in the other nostril.**
6. Give the swab to the medical assistant.
7. Replace mask to cover your nose.



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Medical Assistant: Nasal Swab Collection

Patient Collection Process

1. Give patient instructions to read and review.
2. Answer any questions about the collection procedure.
3. When patient is ready, peel back package and direct patient to grasp swab stick.
4. Instruct patient to lower mask to reveal nose (mask should still cover the mouth).
5. Observe patient during sample collection and assist with procedure as needed.
6. Be prepared to receive swab from patient and insert into original swab package.
7. Instruct patient to replace mask over the nose.
8. Label swab package with patient name and DOB before placing in specimen bag.

Medical Assistant Collection Process

1. Instruct patient to lower mask to reveal nose (mask should still cover the mouth).
2. If copious nasal drainage, instruct patient blow nose prior to sample collection.
3. Peel back package back and grasp swab stick.
4. Insert swab into nostril approximately 1 inch.
5. Gently rotate swab several times against the nasal wall then slowly remove from the nostril.
6. Using the same swab, repeat sample collection in the other nostril.
7. Insert swab into original package, label swab package with patient name and DOB then place in specimen bag.
8. Instruct patient to replace mask over the nose.
9. Prepare for transport to lab for processing.

Collection Instructions:

1. Ensure appropriate order is placed within MedConnect.
2. Attach LabCorp specimen bag with printed requisition inside to door frame outside exam room. On opposite side of door frame, add a clear bag with new gloves & mask, and eye protection. (This can be done using magnetic clips or strong tape)
 - a. Use normal LabCorp specimen bag for symptomatic patient or return-to-work testing
 - b. Use YELLOW Priority LabCorp specimen bag for asymptomatic pre-op testing
3. Clean hands; Don the following PPE based on guidelines:
 - a. If asymptomatic pre-op or return-to-work (patient self-swabbing): no gown required; wear gloves, surgical mask, and eye protection.
 - i. If needing to help the patient with swabbing, add gown
 - b. If symptomatic PUI: add gown to the above
4. Enter room, explain testing procedure (self-administered or MA performed). Advise patient to lower mask just under the nostrils (keeping mouth covered). Show patient laminated guideline on how to collect specimen.
5. Collect specimen; label specimen while in the presence of the patient (full name, DOB, date, time and source of specimen-nasal).
6. Use Sani wipe to open door; drop specimen into hanging LabCorp specimen bag.
7. Still in the room, doff gloves, mask, eye protection; Clean hands.
8. Exit the room. Clean hands again. Don new gloves & mask, and (optional) eye protection from clear bag hanging from patient door; take specimen to lab. Store frozen (preferred) or refrigerated if freezer unavailable.
9. Clean hands; document in the EMR.