

## How to Proctor an Anterior Nasal Specimen Self-Collection for COVID-19

### Requirements for Local Health Districts:

- Must have a CLIA Certificate or Waiver to perform proctored tests
- Proctors must demonstrate competency in how to properly proctor a nasal swab specimen collection. Competency must be documented by a supervisor using the checklist at the end of this document.
- There must be an LHD staff member or volunteer on site who is trained in CPR/First Aid (at a minimum) to handle any questions or concerns patients may have, as well as to be available to respond to medical emergencies (ie: difficulty breathing, fainting, etc.) that may occur during the test collection.

### Preparing for self collection:

- Patient should:
  - Wear a face mask that is covering the nose and mouth, perform hand hygiene, and ensure they have all supplies needed for specimen self-collection (i.e. swab)
- Proctor should:
  - Perform hand hygiene and don appropriate PPE. Proctors should use [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) recommended by the CDC for those working within 6 feet of patients suspected to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, which includes an N95 or higher-level respirator (or medical/surgical grade face mask if a respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown. Gloves should be changed between each patient and hand hygiene should be performed again. Do not wear the same pair of gloves for the care of more than one patient.
  - Assemble all supplies needed for collection (Nasal Swab and Viral Transport Medium (VTM), lab requisition form, specimen label and biohazard bag).
  - Ensure required patient information on requisition form is complete, legible, and accurate.
  - Label the vial with the client's name, date of birth, date and time collected, and specimen source (Nose).

### Under a proctor's supervision, the patient may perform an anterior nasal specimen self-collection.

The proctor should review and instruct the patient to follow the collection instructions below. Print and laminate the [CDC infographic](#) on how to self-collect an anterior nasal specimen. Refer the patient to this infographic while explaining self-collection. When collection is complete, wipe down the laminated copy with medical grade sanitizing wipes in between patients.

- Using a clean set of gloves, the proctor will open the swab package with the swab handle exposed, and have the patient take the swab out of the package. Ensure the patient does not touch the swab tip except when placing in the nose to collect the sample.
- To avoid contact with fluids, the proctor should maintain a safe distance from the patient while they are self-collecting their specimen.
- The patient will remove their face mask, and then insert the entire collection tip of the swab provided (usually ½ to ¾ of an inch, or 1 to 1.5 cm) into the nostril exhibiting the most drainage, or the nostril that is most congested, if drainage is not visible.
- The patient will firmly sample the nasal wall by rotating the swab in a circular path **against** the nasal wall at least **5** times. It should take approximately 15 seconds to collect the specimen. Be sure to collect any nasal drainage that may be present on the swab.
- Repeat in the other nostril using the same swab.

- After collecting the sample and before approaching the proctor, the patient will place their face mask back on, ensuring their nose and mouth are covered.
- The **proctor will hold** the viral transport media tube and the **patient will place the swab (tip down)** in the tube. (Note: be sure to place the swab, tip first, into the transport media tube).
- Proctor will break off the swab handle at the perforation and screw the cap on tightly to the specimen tube.
- Proctor will verify the specimen label for accuracy and ensure it matches exactly to the lab requisition (verify full name, date of birth, and other demographic information).
- Proctor will place the specimen in a biohazard bag and seal the bag tightly.
- Proctor will wipe down the biohazard bag with a sanitizing wipe.
- Proctor will remove gloves and perform hand hygiene, to avoid contaminating the outside of the bag.
- Proctor will place lab paperwork in the outside pocket of the biohazard bag.

**NOTE:** Self collection must be observed by a trained LHD employee/volunteer. VDH suggests that LHDs use the training materials provided by the CDC (see links below). A supervisor or public health nurse may train individuals and deem them competent to observe self collection, using the competency checklist provided below.

### **Resources**

[CDC Interim Guidelines for Collecting and Handling of Clinical Specimens for COVID-19 Testing](#)

[CDC Infographic on How to Collect an Anterior Nasal Swab Specimen for COVID-19 Testing](#)

[FDA Recommendations on Providing Clear Instructions to Patients Who Self-Collect an Anterior Nares \(Nasal\) Sample in a Health Care Setting for SARS-CoV-2 Testing - Letter to Health Care Providers](#)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Proctored Self-Collected Nasal Swab Procedure**

No.	Task Steps	Pass
1.	Assemble supplies: Nasal Swab and Viral Transport Medium (VTM), lab requisition form, specimen label and biohazard bag.	
2.	Verify that the requisition form is complete. Label the vial with the client’s name, date of birth, date and time collected, and specimen source (Nose).	
3.	Perform hand hygiene. <b>Proctors should use PPE as recommended by the CDC for those working within 6 feet of a patient suspected to be infected with SARS-CoV-2.<sup>1</sup></b> Proctors should wear an N95 or higher-level respirator (or medical/surgical grade face mask if a respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown. Patients should perform hand hygiene, and wear a face mask that is covering the nose and mouth.	
4.	<b>Explain the following procedure for Nasal Swab self-collection.</b>	
5.	Open nasal swab package exposing the stick of the nasal swab. Have the person remove the swab, taking care not to touch the tip on any surface or lay it down. Then have the person remove their face mask.	
	a. Observe the person carefully inserting the dry nasal swab into the <b>nostril exhibiting the most drainage</b> , or the nostril that is <b>most congested</b> , if drainage is not visible.	
	b. Observe the person using gentle rotation, push the swab until resistance is met at the level of the turbinate (usually ½ to ¾ of an inch into the nostril). Rotate the swab five (5) times or more <i>against</i> the nasal wall, and then slowly remove from the nostril. It should take approximately 15 seconds to collect the specimen.	
	c. Observe the person using the same swab, repeat sample collection in the other nostril. d. After collecting the sample and before approaching the proctor, the patient will place their face mask back on, ensuring their nose and mouth are covered.	
6.	Observe/assist the person placing the nasal swab (swab tip end down) into the viral transport medium (VTM). Then the <b>proctor</b> will break (snap) off at the indicator line on the swab.	
7.	<b>Proctor</b> will replace cap and screw cap on <b>securely</b> .	
8.	<b>Proctor</b> will verify labeled specimen with the patient information on the lab requisition form, ensuring they match, place in biohazard bag, and seal the bag.	
9.	<b>Proctor</b> will wipe down the biohazard bag with a sanitizing wipe.	
10.	<b>Proctor</b> will remove gloves, dispose of them in trash, and perform hand hygiene.	
11.	With clean hands (after performing hand hygiene) the <b>proctor</b> will place lab paperwork in the outside pocket of the biohazard bag.	
12.	<b>Proctor</b> will instruct the patient to perform hand hygiene after self-collection.	
13.	Store and ship specimens refrigerated (on ice) at 4°C within 72 hours. Store specimens at -70 °C or colder if the sample cannot be delivered to the DCLS within 72 hours.	

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**References:**

<sup>1</sup>CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html#handling-specimens-safely>