



Respiratory Virus PCR (Swab)

Synonyms

SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, WN-CoV, Novel CoV; [Coronavirus](#); [Influenzae A](#); [Influenzae B](#); [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\)](#).

Clinical Indication

Clinical indication (SARS-CoV-2):

- More common symptoms are fever, a new and continuous cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of appetite, anosmia (loss of smell) and ageusia (loss of taste). Non-specific symptoms include shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of appetite, myalgia, sore throat, headache, nasal congestion, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting.
- Atypical symptoms, such as delirium and reduced mobility, can present in older and immunocompromised people, often in the absence of a fever.
- Contact of a confirmed case
- Admission screening on patients with symptoms of respiratory illness

Patients who are being discharged to a care home must have a **lateral flow test**, rather than a PCR, within the 48 hours leading up to their discharge.

Part of Profile / See Also

[Test includes SARS-CoV-2, Influenzae A, Influenzae B, RSV.](#)

[See also](#): PF-PTD-457 Abbott ID NOW (POCT) PCR for COVID-19 (Urgent pre-op or admission screen); PF-PTD-188 Respiratory Virus Detection ([Sputum and BAL](#)); PF-PTD-260 Respiratory Virus Antibodies; PF-PTD-261 RSV Detection.

Request Form

[ICE order comms form \(Handwritten request – only if order comms not available\)](#).

Availability / Frequency of Analysis

Swabs are tested at the Pathology First Hub Laboratory. Testing is available 7 days a week.

[Samples may be referred for extended respiratory virus testing under the guidance of the Microbiology Consultants. These referred samples are tested at Cambridge PHE reference laboratory.](#)

Turnaround Time

For tests carried out at Pathology First Hub the turnaround time is 24 hours. Samples referred to PHE Cambridge will be up to 72 hours.

Patient Preparation

Sample Requirements

Samples to be packaged and transported to local laboratory (Pathology First) using Category B UN3373 approved packaging.

Collect samples according to current PHE and local guidance taking care to wear appropriate PPE and disinfect surfaces and outside of samples as required.

Double bag samples at source. Place some absorbent material (eg tissue) in the primary bag. NEVER Place the request form in the primary bag.

Samples collected within the hospital must be delivered by hand to pathology reception and NEVER placed in the air tube system. Ensure the person at reception is aware of the nature of the sample.

Samples from outside sources should be placed in UN3373 bag and delivered by hand directly to the lab OR by courier. It is advisable to put the double bagged samples in an envelope labelled 'Possible Coronavirus Samples – Microbiology' so the sample can be differentiated easily from other samples.

Specimen Type

Swab: Nose, Throat, or combined Nose and Throat.

Volume

Container

Swab in Viral Transport Medium (VTM) tube. Green or Red top swabs are acceptable.



Samples should be transported to laboratory immediately

Reference Range & Units

Interferences

Interpretation & Clinical

Decision Value (if applicable)

References

Test code

Lab Handling

Interpretive comments will be included in final report.

IHRV

FLUP – for referred specimens

Samples are stable in the primary tube for 96 hours. If there is a delay in transport to the laboratory the sample should be refrigerated. Should the laboratory be unable to process the samples, for example due to demand higher than capacity, tests will be referred to an alternative laboratory for testing.