

Advice for people tested for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

Last updated: 20 May 2020

If a doctor suspects you may have novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, follow the advice below until your doctor or the public health unit advises that you no longer need to be in isolation.

How is COVID-19 tested?

We test for COVID-19 and other respiratory viral illnesses by taking a swab inside your nose. This is called a “nasopharyngeal swab”. Your nurse will take a swab of the secretions (mucus) in the back of your nose and the nasopharynx, which is the space at the back of your throat that connects your nose to your mouth. The swabs will be sent to a lab and studied to see if the COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses are present.

What can I expect during a nasopharyngeal swab?

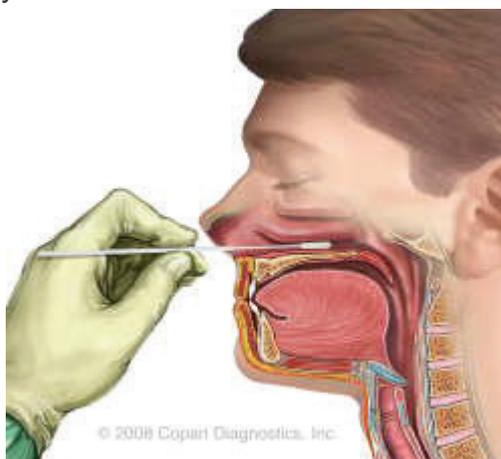
- You may gag a little during the test
- You may also feel slightly uncomfortable, but you should not feel any pain
- You may have watery eyes
- You may have a minor nosebleed afterwards

How do I prepare for a nasopharyngeal swab?

No preparation is needed.

What happens during a nasopharyngeal swab?

- You will sit upright with your head tilted back
- Your nurse will wear a gown, mask, face shield and gloves
- Your nurse will insert a sterile, cotton-tipped swab through both nostrils to the back of your nose and rotate it gently.



Source: <https://www.rapidmicrobiology.com/>

What happens after nasopharyngeal swabs?

After your test, you may notice that your nose feels slightly irritated. You should be able to resume your normal activities straight away.

You will be tested for the Novel Coronaviruses and other respiratory viruses, such as influenza.

Monitor symptoms

Whilst you wait for your results, if your illness gets worse, you should call the doctor who cares for you or the emergency department. If it is a medical emergency (e.g. shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing) you should call 000. Tell the ambulance staff you are suspected to have COVID-19.

Stay at home

You should cease your activities outside your home, except for seeking medical care. You should not go to work, school/university, the gym, or public areas, and should not use public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares, until cleared by your doctor or public health unit.

Separate yourself from other people in the home

If you are sharing the home with others, as much as possible, you should:

- Remain separated from others
- Wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room as another person
- Use a separate bathroom, if available
- Avoid shared or communal areas and wear a surgical mask when moving through these areas.

Make sure that you do not share a room with people who are at risk of severe disease, such as elderly people and those who have heart, lung or kidney conditions, and diabetes.

People who do not have an essential need to be in the home should not visit while you are in isolation.

Cover coughs and sneezes

You should cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, alternatively cough or sneeze into your sleeve/elbow. Used tissues should be placed in a bin, and hands immediately washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Wash your hands

You should wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty.

Ensure you wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser:

- Before entering an area where there are other people
- Before touching things used by other people
- After using the bathroom
- After coughing or sneezing

Avoid sharing household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water or use a dishwasher/washing machine.

Getting your test results

It can take up to 72 hours for your test results to come through. Please ensure that the information you provided to our clinic staff is accurate.

For positive test results, you will receive a phone call to inform you and ensure you are aware of the necessary requirements moving forward.

For negative test results, those with an Australian mobile phone number, will receive a text message informing you of your negative results. If your GP has ordered the test, they will also be able to access your results.

Not heard from us? If you have not received your results after 72 hours:

- Contact your GP directly if they ordered the test
- Call St Vincent's Hospital on (02) 8382 1111 to request your results. Outside of business hours, staff will take down your name and number and you will be contacted the following business day.

Isolation requirements for people who have tested negative

People who:

- are a close contact of a person with confirmed COVID-19 while they were infectious;
OR
- have been overseas

Must still remain in isolation for 14 days after contact with the person or entering the country even if the COVID-19 test is negative.

If during the 14 days you develop additional symptoms or your current symptoms get worse please call your doctor.

Other people with a negative test may return to their normal activities and have no isolation requirements.

If you are unsure, contact the National Coronavirus Health Information line: 1300 066 055.

Still have questions or need support while in isolation?

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information line 1800 020 080

Visit <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-suspected.aspx>

For more information

Visit the [NSW Health Website](#) .