Guide for First Responders: COVID-19 Testing
NC State Laboratory of Public Health

Information for your provider:

The following are acceptable specimen types:
- Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab
- Oropharyngeal (OP) swab
- Nasal swab
- Mid-turbinate swab

Use a synthetic tipped, sterile swab of appropriate size with a plastic or metal shaft. Do not use a calcium alginate swab or one with a wood shaft.

The following are acceptable media types:
- VTM (NCSLPH or Commercial)
- Saline
- MTM (i.e., PrimeStore)

Label the vial containing the swab completely:
- Swab type
- Patient Name
- Date of Collection
- Date of Birth

Store properly until shipment:
- Refrigerate at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours
- Freeze at -70°C for longer storage

Completely fill out the COVID-19 submittal form online in our ETOR portal.

All specimens should be packaged and shipped as a UN3373 Category B, Biological Substance.

Ship overnight using commercial courier (UPS, FedEx) or private courier (e.g., hospital couriers). The State Courier cannot be used.

Keep cold. Ship refrigerated specimens on frozen cold packs and any -70°C frozen specimens on dry ice (the latter following IATA regulations).

Label the package completely.

Attention: Virology/Serology Unit, COVID-19
North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health
4312 District Drive
Raleigh, NC 27607-5490

Specimen deliveries are received at the State Lab loading dock from:
- 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday
- 8 a.m. - noon, Saturday

We electronically share the results with your provider, usually within 1-2 days from when we receive the specimen. They should also provide you with guidance for Persons Under Investigation (English and Spanish).

As a first responder, you are prioritized for COVID-19 testing if you become ill.

1. Call your doctor if you develop symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
2. Wear a surgical mask to your appointment.
3. Your healthcare provider will determine if testing is needed.