

Preparing and Practicing for a COVID-19 Swab



About This Guide

The procedure to obtain a COVID-19 nose swab can be impactful to individuals with existing health and wellness related conditions. To ensure success with testing it is recommended that patients and their caregivers be well prepared for the testing procedure and practice in advance of the appointment.

This guide will walk you through the step-by-step process of the procedure and give you tips to increase successful participation in testing.

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BEFORE PRACTICING, ESTABLISH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Position: Will the person be sitting in a chair or laying on a table? If unsure, consult with your provider. Practice in the position the person will be in during the test.
2. Reward: Identify a reward to be used during practice such as a preferred candy or preferred snack. The reward should only be available *during time of practice* and no other time during the day during preparation. Explain to the person this will be provided during practice. Explain the expectations for earning the reward (i.e. stay still, safe hands, etc.). **This same reward should be used on the day of the in-person swab.**
3. Coping Tool: If appropriate, identify a coping tool to be used while the swab is occurring. For example, a “lovey”, stuffed animal, electronic device, music, or sensory item.
4. Roles: Identify who can assist with practicing. A typical test requires at least three people: one person being the lead and holding hands, another holding the head still, and a third doing the swab.
5. Document: As you go through this practice, be sure to document positions, language or other techniques used that helped ensure success. Bring this with you to the appointment and notify your provider so the same techniques can be used on the day of the in-person swab.

HOW TO PRACTICE:

Introduction:

The patient will master each step in order, adding the next step to the previously mastered step before it. By the end of practice, the patient should have completed the entire testing process successfully. We expect that this practice can be completed if you have at least 3 days prior to testing to practice.

Success can be measure by the patient's ability to:

1. Sits or lay down as they would in the testing location
2. Tolerate another person holding their hands while positioned on lap
3. Tolerate another person holding hand on the forehead
4. Hold head up, chin pointed up for 15 seconds
5. Tolerate hand and head being held while “doctor” places Q-Tip on nose
6. Tolerate hand and head being held while “doctor” places Q-Tip in nose

Roles:

- Lead adult (lead adult (hand holder))
- Head holder
- Doctor
- Patient

Materials:

- Q-Tip

Step 1: Sitting or Lying Down

Purpose: The patient will sit as they would in the testing location for 2 minutes.

Disclaimer: For this step it is important to check-in with the location where the patient will be tested to determine where they have patients test.

Steps to Implementation:

1. The lead adult (hand holder) should tell the patient, “We’re going to sit/lay down for your swab in the chair/bed” and gesture to the seat
2. The lead adult should tell the patient, “Great sitting”
3. Set a timer for 2 minutes, as soon as the 2 minutes are reached provide verbal praise (i.e., “Great sitting” and reward - small piece of candy or a bite of snack)
 - a. If the patient cannot sit for the entire 2 minutes at first, try for a smaller amount first such as 30 seconds, and slowly increase by 30 seconds each time you practice until you reach 2 minutes

Mastery Criteria: Once the patient can do this 3 times in a row while staying seated/laying down and not displaying challenging behavior, proceed to the next step.



Step 2: Hands Over Hands

Purpose: The patient will tolerate another person holding their hands on their lap.

Steps to Implementation:

1. Implement Step 1, as soon as the patient sits, move to the next step here *(do not wait the full 2 minutes to move to the next step as that should be the entirety of the test)*
2. The lead adult (hand holder) should state to the patient: "Time for the swab- I am going to hold your hands on your lap"
3. The lead adult (hand holder) will then place their hands over the patient's and slowly count to 15 out loud. As soon as they get to 15, provide verbal praise (i.e. "Awesome job staying still!") and reward (i.e. a small piece of candy or bite of snack).

Mastery Criteria: Once the patient can do this 3 times in a row while staying still and not displaying challenging behavior, proceed to the next step.



Step 3: Hands Over Head

Purpose: The patient will tolerate both their hands being held and head being held simultaneously.

Steps to Implementation:

1. Implement step 1 as described above, see below for combining steps 2 and 3
2. The lead adult (hand holder) should state to the patient: “Time for the swab, I am going to hold your hands on your lap”
3. The head holder should then state: “I will place my hands on your head”
4. The lead adult (hand holder) and head holder should place their hands on patient at approximately the same time. The lead adult (hand holder) should then slowly count to 15 out loud. As soon as the lead adult (hand holder) gets to 15, provide verbal praise (i.e. “Awesome job staying still!”) and reward (i.e. a small piece of candy or bite of snack).

Mastery Criteria: Once your patient can do this 3 times in a row while staying still and not displaying challenging behavior, proceed to the next step.



Step 4: Holding Head Up and Back for Testing

Purpose: The patient will sit and hold their head with chin pointed up for 15 seconds.

Steps to Implementation:

1. Prompt the patient to sit and move through steps 1 through 3
2. The lead adult (hand holder) should praise the patient for sitting and allowing hand and head holding
3. The lead adult (hand holder) should say, “We need to hold our heads up, like this” and model pointing the chin up and holding the head back
4. If the patient cannot imitate the movement, the lead adult (hand holder) should facilitate with a light physical guide
5. Once the patients head is in the appropriate position, praise and say “Let’s keep it like that for 15 seconds,” and count 1 to 15, or 15 to 1 depending on which the patient is historically most successful with
6. Following the 15 seconds, the lead adult (hand holder) should provide verbal praise and a reward as described above



Step 5: Q-Tip On Nose

Purpose: The patient will tolerate their hands and head being held while the doctor places the Q-Tip to the nose.

Disclaimer: In step 4, the patient has learned to sit for 2 minutes and keep their head up for 15 seconds. The Q-Tip On Nose (step 5) and Q-Tip In Nose (step 6) should be completed within this timeframe.

Steps to Implementation:

This step differs from the first four to more closely approximate the test, following the completion of step 1 (i.e. the patient is sitting or lying) follow the steps below

1. The lead adult (hand holder) should state to the patient: “Time for the swab- I am going to hold your hands on your lap”
2. The head holder should then state: “I will place my hands on your head”
3. The lead adult should verbally and physically (if necessary) prompt “Head up”
4. The doctor should then state: “I will place the Q-Tip on your nose”
5. The doctor will then place the Q-Tip on the outside of the nose and immediately remove. As soon as the Q-Tip is moved from the nose, the lead adult (hand holder) should provide verbal praise (i.e. awesome job staying still!) and reward (i.e. a small piece of candy or bite of snack)



Step 6: Q-Tip In Nose

Purpose: The patient will tolerate their hands and head being held while the doctor places the Q-Tip in the nose.

Disclaimer: In step 4, the patient has learned to sit for 2 minutes and keep their head up for 15 seconds. The Q-Tip On Nose (step 5) and Q-Tip In Nose (step 6) should be completed within this timeframe.

Steps to Implementation:

This step differs from the first four to more closely approximate the test, following the completion of step 1 (i.e. the patient is sitting or lying) follow the steps below

1. The lead adult (hand holder) should state to the patient: “Time for the swab, I am going to hold your hands on your lap”
2. The head holder should then state: “I will place my hands on your head”
3. The doctor should then state: “I will place the Q-Tip in your nose”
4. The lead adult (hand holder) and head holder should place their hands on patient at approximately the same time.
5. The lead adult should verbally and physically (if necessary) prompt “Head up”
6. The doctor will then place the Q-Tip slightly in the nose. The lead adult (hand holder) should slowly count to 15 out loud. As soon as the lead adult (hand holder) gets to 15, provide verbal praise (i.e. awesome job staying still!) and reward (i.e. a small piece or candy or bite of snack).



DISCLAIMER:

If you're having difficulty teaching these steps, reach out to your provider; additional consult is available upon request.

Refer to the '*COVID-19 Testing Social Story*' for additional instructions on preparing individuals for COVID-19 testing.

For basic troubleshooting, please see 'Troubleshooting' section of this guide.

To schedule a consult, please reach out to Christina Fredericks at: Christina.Fredericks@URMC.rochester.edu

TROUBLESHOOTING:

1. **Length of time:** If you're having trouble counting up to 15 due to extended touch, inability to sit still, etc., you can lessen the expected amount of time. You can begin with as low as 2-3 seconds, and as the person is successful three times in a row, continue to increase the amount of time slowly.
2. **Mastering quickly:** If it is clear teaching does not need to occur in one step because the person has no trouble tolerating their hands being held, you can advance to the next step.
3. **Reward no longer working:** It may be clear the person is no longer showing interest in the reward, and it is making practicing more challenging. It is okay to change what the reward is. If appropriate, involve the person in selecting what they would like to work for. The reward will vary greatly depending on age. The immediacy of delivery is what is most important.
4. **Number of People:** If there are not enough people in the home to practice all of the steps cumulatively, practice one step at a time.