A designated process describing the method or steps required to complete a clinical technique or psychomotor skill. This procedure supports all FNHA’s organizational directives and operating principles, based on FNHA values of respect, culture, discipline, excellence, relationships and fairness. Patients have the right to receive and guide quality care delivered in the context of cultural safety and humility.

PURPOSE
To provide the steps necessary to complete a saline gargle rinse specimen collection in children/youth and for adults for COVID-19 testing.

To see who is qualified to perform this procedure, see Appendix A: Parameters for Gargle Testing for COVID-19

For sites without onsite specimen collection, see Appendix A: Parameters for Gargle Testing for COVID-19

For the most current guidelines on who should be tested, see Appendix A: Parameters for Gargle Testing for COVID-19

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for contact and droplet precautions**
  - gown
  - gloves
  - surgical/procedural mask (do not require the use of an N95 respirator)
  - eye protection (face shield or goggles)

- **General items**
  - Clean field such as a blue pad to place supplies on
  - Patient Handout under Resources below
  - Saline gargle rinse kit; see Appendix C
  - Labels for specimen container and requisition; see Appendix E
  - Biohazard bag
  - Procedure mask for patient
  - Access to hand hygiene supplies for nurse and patient
  - Box of tissues
1. **PROCEDURE**

1.1 *Prepare the patient*

1. Before arriving for their test, instruct child, youth or adult to not eat, drink (even water), chew gum, brush teeth, vape or smoke at least one hour before the mouth rinse and gargle test. These could affect the results. Prior to arriving for testing:
   - encourage children and caregivers to review this [video](#) for children and hand out sample collection procedure for either younger children or youth and encourage them to practice at least 2 hrs prior to the arriving at a collection centre.
   - For adults refer to gargle rinse [video](#) and [instructions for adults](#).

2. Explain the procedure. Ensure parent/s or legal guardian and/or patient understands procedure to give informed consent for the sample collection.

3. Perform hand hygiene.


1.2 *Specimen collection* with children and youth (grades K-12) and adults. For adult specimen collection see [Appendix F](#).

1. Label collection tube. See [Appendix B](#).
   - Patient name
   - PHN or Date of Birth
   - Specimen type (e.g. saline gargle)
   - Date and time of collection

2. Children can sit or stand with or beside their caregiver.

3. Ensure everyone is wearing a mask.

4. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

5. Twist off the top of the pink vial of salty water. **Remove the child’s mask or ask patient (adult) to remove mask.**

6. For children squeeze all of the water into their mouth; youth or adult may squeeze all of the water into their mouth. **Ask the child or patient not to swallow or talk.** Put the mask back on.

7. Ask the child or patient to **swish** the water around in their mouth for 5 seconds.

8. Ask the child or patient to tip their head back and **gargle** for another 5 seconds.

9. Repeat **swishing** and **gargling** 2 more times for a total of 30 seconds.
10. **Remove the child’s mask or have patient remove their mask.** Ask the child or patient to spit the water into the container. **Put the mask back on.**
11. Place the container on the surface. Tap the funnel with finger to ensure that all of the “gargle” has passed through the container.
12. Remove funnel and secure lid.
13. Place specimen in the biohazard bag and seal.
14. Both you and the child or patient wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
15. Instruct child/caregiver or patient that if the child or patient tests positive, the caregiver or patient will be contacted by Public Health and provided instructions on what to do next. Information on accessing test results via text message, telephone or online is available on the [BCCDC website](https://www.bccdc.ca/)

### 1.3 Preparing specimen to send off for laboratory testing
1. Complete laboratory requisition with patient demographics, the doctor, nurse practitioner MSP or Certified Nursing Practice MSP billing number, time and date of specimen collection, test being ordered (COVID-19 NAT) and priority code. See [Appendix D Laboratory Requisition for COVID-19 testing](#) for sample laboratory requisition.
2. Request that a copy of the results be sent to the health centre/nursing station as applicable. If using the billing number of a physician or a nurse practitioner who is not at the work site, indicate on the lab requisition that the health centre or nursing station should receive a copy of the result.
3. Provide a confidential fax line. The fax machine must be secured behind two locked doors.
4. The following samples will **not** be processed and this will delay testing:
   - Unlabeled samples
   - Leaking samples
   - Patient name on the sample does not match name on requisition
   - Samples accompanied by indecipherable, blank or no requisitions
   - Sample collected in wrong container
5. Fold completed laboratory requisition and place in outer pouch of biohazard bag.
6. Place in fridge until it is sent to lab.

Stability testing performed by BCCDC has confirmed that the specimens may be stored/transported within the same temperature conditions as the nasopharyngeal swabs, i.e. less than 24 hours at room temperature and if greater than 24 hours to be stored at 2-8°C for up to 8 days.

7. Send specimen to laboratory as soon as possible as per [Transportation of Dangerous Goods](https://www.gov.bc.ca) standards.
8. If performing test on the GeneXpert®, the sampling size is the same as for nasopharyngeal specimens, e.g., 300 µL.

### 1.4 Follow up after specimen sent to lab
The regional health authority (RHA), Medical Health Officer (MHO) and FNHA Communicable Disease (CD) team will automatically receive a copy of a positive lab result of COVID-19, as with any reportable
communicable disease. Patients can sign up to have their test results by text message if they are able to receive text messages, see the BCCDC Test Results page to sign up. If patients are unable to sign up for text message results, the CHN will tell the patient of their negative results. In order to receive the negative results at the health centre, CHNs must ensure they are cc’d to receive the negative results (Example below). The CHN will follow up with a patient a couple of days later to see if they are still symptomatic and need repeat testing. The regional health authority does not follow up negative test results.

- **Positive result:** As the RHA automatically receives a positive lab report, collaborate with them to establish who will notify the patient, conduct the case interview, and do contact tracing.

- For more information see:
  - COVID-19 Adapted RHA-FNHA Communicable Disease Protocol
  - COVID-19 – Notice and Follow-up Process for a Confirmed Case in a First Nations Community
  - Information for Health Directors and Community Leaders—Public Health processes and role of communities during COVID-19

- **Negative result for symptomatic patient:**
  - If patient symptoms and exposure are still consistent with COVID-19, communicate with the regional health authority communicable disease unit to consult with the MHO about next steps.
  - Liaise with the physician or nurse practitioner with whom you were working and discuss next steps (e.g., if the patient needs other tests/assessments to be completed if it is not COVID-19).

2. **DOCUMENTATION**

   In Appendix A of FNHA Considerations for Implementing COVID-19 Specimen Collection in First Nations Communities FAQ.

3. **RESOURCES**

   **For healthcare providers:**

   Understanding COVID-19 tests and interpreting results: [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-site/Documents/COVID19_InterpretingTesting_Results_NAT_PCR.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-site/Documents/COVID19_InterpretingTesting_Results_NAT_PCR.pdf)
CLINICAL PROCEDURE: Saline Gargle Specimen Testing Grades K-12 and Adults

AUTHORIZATION: Debbie McDougall, Director of Collaborative Practice

DATE APPROVED: January 15, 2021

CURRENT VERSION DATE: Page 5 of 12

FNHA Regions-RHA contact information:

FNHA Interim Guide to Using Personal Protective Equipment:

FNHA Transportation of Dangerous Goods COVID-19 Specimens: Standard of Practice:

Northern Health Authority - COVID-19 LPN Nasopharyngeal Swab testing course #23122:
https://learninghub.phsa.ca/Learner/Home

PHSA eLab Handbook:
http://www.elabhandbook.info/PHSA/Test/ManageTests.aspx
Understanding COVID-19 tests and interpreting results

COVID-19 Adapted Regional Health Authority - FNHA Communicable Disease Protocol-April 2020:

The COVID-19 testing by Nucleic Acid Test does not detect immunity to COVID-19. It will only detect if the patient is currently infected with the virus. Differences between Viral and Antibody Tests

For patients:
Handout on what to do after you get tested:

If you are sick:
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/if-you-are-sick

COVID-19 test for children:

BCCDC COVID-19: Test Results
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/test-results

Developer(s):
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4. REFERENCES


http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_GargleSpit_Adults_instructions.pdf

http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/covid-19-testing/viral-testing


5. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Parameters for Gargle Testing for COVID-19
Appendix B: Lab Collection
Appendix C: Saline Garge Rinse Kit
Appendix D: Lab Requisitions
Appendix E: Laboratory Requisition for COVID-19 Gargle Testing
Appendix F: Saline Gargle Test for Adult
Appendix A: Parameters for Gargle Testing for COVID-19

1. **Who can collect specimens?**
   Health care providers who are able to collect specimens by nasopharyngeal (NP) and gargle routes for COVID-19 include:
   - Physicians,
   - Nurse Practitioners,
   - Registered Nurses (RNs),
   - Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) and
   - Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).
   Clinicians must possess the competence to perform NP swabs safely and have employer support in order to do so. For testing children of any age, the tester must be appropriately trained to perform the nasopharyngeal swab (NP) safely, and there must be adequate supports available.

   Submission of specimens for COVID-19 testing requires an MSP billing number from a physician, nurse practitioner or nurse who has been assigned an MSP billing number to submit the sample to the lab.

   Processes for supporting all designations of nursing practice varies in each health authority. All nurses are to follow BCCNM, BCCDC and employer guidelines or policies. Nurses are encouraged to reach out to regional nursing teams for further guidance and support.

   RNs can collect specimens autonomously or with a patient specific order.

   For more information, see:  

   There may be physicians or nurse practitioners who want to partner with nurses to offer testing through their MSP billing numbers. Nurses may also explore options through the new First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program.

2. **Where does collection of specimens occur?**
   Patients can access testing through physicians’ offices, walk-in clinics, collection centres or urgent and primary care centres. A collection centre is a location where a person can be assessed and tested for COVID-19.

   Individuals can call 8-1-1 to find the nearest centre or see locations online: BC COVID-19 collection centre finder (mobile and desktop); collection centre finder for Internet Explorer users.

   See:  

3. **Who should be tested for COVID-19?**

   See: [COVID-19: Adult and Pediatric Viral Testing Guidelines for British Columbia](https://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing)

   Asymptomatic testing is not recommended at this time outside of specific recommendations from a medical health officer (MHO).

   It is ideal to do a point of care risk assessment (PCRA), assess for testing eligibility in advance over the phone, and then book the patient an appointment for testing to ensure proper preparation.

   For patients who are appropriate for swabbing, initiate filling in the COVID-19 swab-testing document. This is found in **Appendix A** of [FNHA Considerations for Implementing COVID-19 Specimen Collection in First Nations Communities FAQ](https://www.fnha.org/considerations-covid-19-specimen-collection-first-nations-communities-faq).
Appendix B: Lab Collection

A list of validated swabs/collection devices that are available for use in BC can be found on the BCCDC Viral Testing page.

All gargle supplies are to be accessed from your PPE working group Nursing representative contact cdmgmt@fnha.ca with any questions.

**Specimen Labelling**

All specimens (cylindrical tube) must have an attached label with the following:

- Patient name
- PHN or date of birth (DOB)
- Specimen type (e.g., NP swab)
- Date and time of collection

Please submit each specimen in an individual, sealed biohazard bag. Include a paper requisition that clearly states the patient information *including patient telephone number, the ordering physician, and the test name (COVID-19 NAT)* (BCCDC, 2020).
Appendix C: Saline Gargle Rinse Kit
### Appendix D: Laboratory Requisition for COVID-19 testing (example below)


Sample Laboratory Requisition found in [FNHA Considerations for Implementing COVID-19 Specimen Collection in First Nations Communities FAQ](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Forms/Labs/VI%20Req.pdf).
Appendix E: Laboratory Requisition for COVID-19 Gargle Testing Update
Appendix F: Saline Gargle Test for Adults

**COVID-19 Mouth Rinse / Gargle Test**

**How-To Video**
Scan the code using your phone camera and watch the instructional video.
You can also visit BC CDC.ca and search “gargle video”.

Please read all the instructions before starting.

1. Wear your face mask.
2. Use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap and water.
3. Take the container and pink tube of salty water.
4. Twist off top of the pink tube. Take off your mask.
5. Squeeze ALL the salty water into your mouth. Do NOT swallow the water.
6. You may be asked by staff to put your mask back on.
7. **Swish** for 5 seconds.
   Tip your head back and **gargle** for 5 seconds.
   Repeat:
   **Swish** for 5 seconds.
   **Gargle** for 5 seconds.
8. If wearing your mask, take it off. Gently spit the water into the container.
10. **Give the container back to the person who gave it to you.**
11. Use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap and water.

Total time: 30 seconds

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