

COVID-19 Swab-Test Training for IMCA Diver Medics

Background

Testing for Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has become commonplace since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Obtaining a sample for testing currently involves the use of a single swab to collect samples from the throat and nose. Taking a high-quality sample can be conducted by a variety of trained personnel or by the individual.

It is now routine for diving contractors to carry out screening and, when available, the testing of divers for SARS-CoV-2. This may occur during mobilisation and prior to going into saturation. Such testing is normally carried out by qualified staff on surface. However, it is possible that, despite every precaution, dive team members may still develop COVID-19 symptoms while offshore. Saturation divers in the chamber complex may show symptoms of COVID-19 while under pressure. In such circumstances testing would be required and a member of the team, normally a Diver Medic, would be asked to take a swab sample in the chamber. Alternatively, the diver may take a self-swab of the throat and nose. No matter who performs the swab-test, it is important that good swabbing technique is observed in order to minimise the risk of inaccurate results. Good lighting and a clear view of the throat is required for the sample to be taken correctly.

Training

It is vital that swab testing is done correctly to obtain an accurate result. To facilitate this, IMCA recommends that with immediate effect:

1. IMCA Diver Medic training providers introduce SARS-CoV-2 swab-test training to their course programmes;
2. diving contractors arrange a SARS-CoV-2 swab-test training session for all their dive team members who hold a Diver Medic qualification.

This training should include:

- ◆ watching a suitable SARS-CoV-2 swab-test demonstration training video;
- ◆ instruction on the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE), specification of PPE to be used, donning, doffing and safe disposal procedures;
- ◆ familiarisation with the instructions contained in a typical polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test kit;
- ◆ instruction on safe working procedures for locking containers with lids in and out of chambers, while safeguarding the sample.

It is not necessary to purchase PCR test kits for this training. A sample PCR test kit instruction sheet is shown in Appendix 1 of this Information Note. A video showing how to take a combined throat and nose swab can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qHTBlxfNes>

This video is from a respected source and demonstrates a self-test procedure. PCR test kits may vary from that shown in the video. The procedure for the taking of a sample by a Diver Medic will be the same as shown in the video referenced above. There are other videos available on how to undertake PCR tests which may be more suitable for the region in which the training is being conducted.

The Diver Medic should wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when undertaking the training and during the subsequent procedure. This should include:

- ◆ apron;
- ◆ medical gloves;
- ◆ appropriate facemask; and
- ◆ eye protection.

For more details, please contact:

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The information contained herein is given for guidance only and endeavours to reflect best industry practice.

For the avoidance of doubt no legal liability shall attach to any guidance and/or recommendation and/or statement herein contained.

Aids such as a pencil torch or a tongue depressor will assist with viewing the back of the throat. It is also recommended that subjects blow their noses and take a drink of water prior to the sample being taken. If taking samples from more than one diver, gloves must be changed and hands thoroughly washed between swabs. PPE must be correctly bagged and labelled after use before being locked out of the chamber and disposed of safely.

Further Guidance

Further guidance on screening and testing of diving personnel for Coronavirus can be found in the latest revision of Information Note [IMCA D 06/20 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – Guidance for Diving Contractors](#).

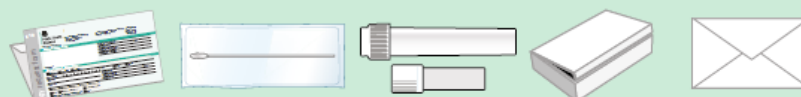
How to take a combined throat and nose swab | Courier version

To test for coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) we need two samples, one from the back of your throat and then from inside the nose with the same swab.

Both tests are commonly used by doctors and nurses but you can take both samples safely yourself.

The testing kit you have received contains everything you need to take the samples:

- a request form
- one swab – this is like a long cotton bud. The kit also contains a small collection tube which you will use to hold the complete swab tip
- a larger white screw topped tube which is used to transport the small collection tube containing the swab
- a cardboard box
- a plastic envelope with pre-paid postage.



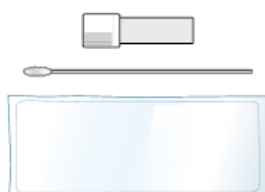
It is very important that you attach the label with your name and date of birth (if there is one) or write this on the small collection tube.

1 Prepare to take throat sample

Please wash your hands carefully before you start.

Then unpack the kit onto a clean surface.

A. First take the throat swab. Open the swab packet which contains the small bottle and pull out the swab.



B. Wipe the soft tip of the swab around the back of your throat as shown in the diagram. Stand in front of a mirror. Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue – you will see an arch at the back of your mouth. Try to swipe the soft tip of the swab across the five areas in the picture as below.

Rub the swab several times across the very back of your throat, behind the arch. This may make you gag but should not be painful. Ensure you also swab the sides of the arch where your tonsils protrude.

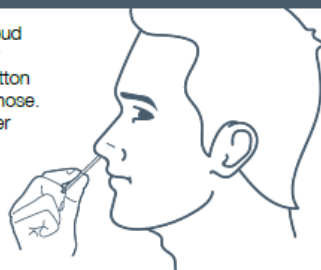
Try to avoid swabbing your tongue and teeth.



2 Next, take the nose sample

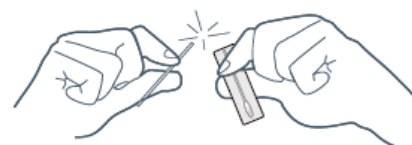
A. Place the tip of the cotton bud gently JUST inside one of your nostrils and gently wipe the cotton bud around the inside of your nose. Please repeat this for your other nostril using the same swab.

No force is needed and you do not have to push far into your nostril.



B. Once you have taken the swab, place the soft tip of the swab into the collection tube and break off the plastic end (at the breaking off point where the swab stick is thinner). Replace the lid on the bottle.

Please avoid touching the cotton bud tip with your hands (before or after the swabbing) to avoid contamination.

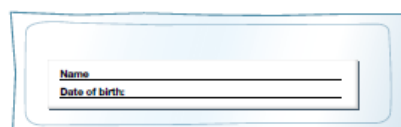


3 Finally, pack the samples

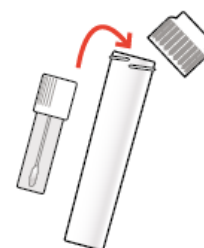
A. Wash your hands again.



B. Write your name, date of birth and today's date on the outside of the small collection tube with the swab. This is very important. Your GP may include sticky labels.



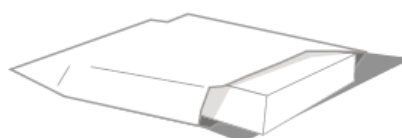
C. Place the small tube inside the large white screw topped lid contained and close the lid tightly. Place the white top container into the cardboard box.



D. Make sure the request form details are correct and place inside the box.



E. Put in plastic envelope and seal.



Courier will arrive to pick up the envelope containing the sample inside the box.

If at any stage your condition worsens, or if you are more worried about your health contact NHS 111 urgently