



**DATE:** March 25, 2020  
**TO:** SHA Staff and Clinicians  
**FROM:** Keri Crawford, Director – Regina & Dr. Jessica Minion – Clinical Lead Public Health  
**RE:** Nasopharyngeal Swab Shortage

---

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs are the recommended specimen to be submitted from outpatients for COVID-19 testing. Across the country there is a significant shortage of NP swabs. We are prioritizing Testing/Assessment sites and Acute Care centers in the province to ensure they have an adequate supply. At this time, swabs will not be sent to physician offices.

As shipments of swabs arrive, we will be consolidating them for prioritization and equitable distribution across the province.

In the absence of NP swabs, we have attached instructions for 2 alternative specimen collection methods:

- **Sputum** – may be collected in a sterile container for in-patients with evidence of a lower respiratory tract infection and productive cough. Do not perform induced sputum collection.
- **Throat/nares** – may be collected using swabs with breakable shafts and transported in viral/universal transport media (VTM/UTM). Do not submit eSwabs or other liquid Amies media used for bacterial culture specimen collection.

Appropriate swabs for throat/nares collection include:

- Aptima® Multitest swabs
- Aptima® Unisex swabs

**Please note: DO NOT use swabs approved for throat/nares specimen collection to attempt a nasopharyngeal specimen collection. Attempting to do so may harm the patient.**

Additional alternative types of swabs are being ordered and in-house universal transport media (UTM) is being produced at the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory. National efforts to secure ongoing supplies of appropriate specimen collection and testing material are also underway.

To access sterile containers appropriate for sputum collection or swab specimens, please contact your local lab or distribution center.

**NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** This information is for the recipient(s) listed and is considered confidential by law. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure, copying or communication of the contents is strictly prohibited.