

SAFETY TALK



TESTING SWABS AND ETHYLENE OXIDE

DID YOU KNOW?

- Testing swabs are sterilized in highly controlled and monitored stages with a gas called ethylene oxide (EtO). The EtO sterilization process is safe, has been used for over 50 years on temperature-and moisture-sensitive medical devices, and is tightly controlled by international standards.

YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- All medical devices imported or sold in Canada (including the swabs used for testing) must obtain Health Canada approval.
- Guidelines have been developed setting out how much residual EtO can remain on a product sterilized using EtO after sterilization.
- During the sterilization procedure, products are placed into a chamber, which is filled with EtO gas. The swabs are only briefly exposed to the gas.
- A major part of the sterilization process ensures EtO residue is removed from the product and makes certain that any EtO left over is negligible, thereby meeting national and international safety standards.
- These standards take into account how a device is used, how often, and for how long. To be on the safe side, the limits of residue were deliberately set to be much lower than the limit thought to be of any risk.
- A person would have to be tested twice weekly for over 40 years in order for the total contact time to be of any concern.
- Based upon **regulatory requirements for Health Canada approval** of COVID-19 swabs and **previous laboratory evaluations** of similar swabs, it is reasonable to believe that there is no significant residual EtO present on approved swabs, and any potential residual levels are far below the levels and frequency potentially associated with adverse health effects.
- Sites for more information:
 - <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/ethylene-oxide-sterilization-medical-devices>
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/medical-devices/testing/test-swabs.html>

QUESTION ?

DO YOU KNOW

WHERE TO GO TO
FIND FACTUAL
INFORMATION
WHEN YOU HAVE
A QUESTION OR
CONCERN?



Saskatchewan
Health Authority

December 23, 2021



INFORMATION SOURCE:

WEEKLY TOPIC: TESTING SWABS AND ETHYLENE OXIDE

DATE:

FACILITY:

DEPARTMENT:

SAFETY TALK CONDUCTED BY:

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR COVID-19 TESTING IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

WHEN SHOULD YOU BE TESTED FOR COVID-19?

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO OBTAIN HOME TESTS FOR REGULAR NON-SYMPOMATIC TESTING?

SAFETY TALK NOTES:

WORKERS PRESENT:

WORKER CONCERNS: