

Information for Parents/Caregivers

Taking your child for a mouth rinse and gargle COVID-19 test

This information can also be found on the [BCCDC website](#)

B.C. is rolling out a new COVID-19 testing option for school-aged children in kindergarten through grade 12. This new method involves swishing and gargling sterile salt water and spitting it into a collection tube.

This new way to test will make it easier for children and youth to get tested. It will replace the swab test for most school-age children and will determine whether they have COVID-19. Here is some information about the process if you have to take your child for a COVID-19 test.

1. Parents and caregivers should assess their child daily for key symptoms of illness before sending them to school. Appendix C of the [Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) provides an example of a daily health check. If your child has one symptom that persists for more than 24 hours, a fever, or two or more symptoms from the list, they should be assessed. You can use [the COVID-19 assessment tool](#) to determine if your child should seek testing.

Testing is available for anyone with cold, influenza or [COVID-19-like symptoms](#)

2. **Watch a video** about what you and your child can expect during a COVID-19 test. Most school-aged children who go to a collection centre can provide a mouth rinse and gargle sample. The nose swab is used for younger children or those who may not be able to follow the swish, gargle and spit instructions. Either test will accurately detect if your child has COVID-19.
 - [Watch: COVID-19 test with a mouth rinse and gargle sample for school-aged children](#)
 - [Watch: COVID-19 test with a nose swab](#)
3. **Practice** the swish, gargle and spit technique with water at home. Make sure to wait at least two hours between practicing and doing the test as practicing could affect test results. Ask your child not to swallow the water or talk when they practice.
4. **Find a collection centre** where children can be tested or contact your health care provider about testing.

Use the collection centre finder on the BCCDC website or call 8-1-1 to find the nearest centre.



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- [Collection centre finder](#) (Mobile and desktop users)
- [Collection centre finder](#) (for Internet Explorer users)

5. When you go for the test:

- You and your child should both wear masks.
- Make sure to have your child's date of birth and their Personal Health Number if they have one.
- Your child should not eat, drink (even water), chew gum, vape or smoke for at least one hour before the mouth rinse and gargle test. They should not practice the swish, gargle and spit method in the two hours before the test. This might affect the amount of virus that is in their mouth, which can affect the results of the test.
- Follow the instructions of the health care provider at the collection centre site.

6. Your child will need to **self-isolate** after their test. This means you should go directly home after their test. Your child should stay home from school and not see visitors. Learn more about [self-isolating after a test](#).

7. Access and understand the **test results**.

If your child tests positive, you will be contacted by Public Health and provided instructions on what to do next. Here are some of the other ways you can access test results:

- Sign up for text message results after you take your child to a COVID-19 collection centre. Visit the [Test Results page](#) on the BCCDC website and fill in their name, date of birth, Personal Health Number and a cell phone number.
- Contact the BCCDC COVID-19 negative results line at 1-833-707-2792 to get these results on your child's behalf. Be ready with your child's PHN, birthdate and the date the test was done. Wait at least 48 hours before calling to make sure the results are available.

Your child's test result could be:

Negative: A negative result is considered negative for COVID-19 unless public health requests follow up testing OR symptoms worsen requiring an assessment and potentially repeat testing

Positive: If your child tests positive for COVID-19, your child will need to stay home for a minimum of 10 days from when their symptoms started. You will be contacted by public health for follow up.

Indeterminate: Results do not provide a clear result for COVID-19 infection. You will be contacted by public health for follow up.

Sample invalid/rejected: Sample could not be tested (e.g. leaked sample, error in labelling/requisition). You will need to recollect another sample for testing.

8. Your child can **stop isolating and return to school** if they test negative and their symptoms are gone unless they have been asked by public health to continue to self-isolate. This might happen if your child has been exposed to someone with COVID-19. If your child tests positive, public health will provide instructions on when they can end isolation.

If symptoms get worse or new symptoms develop, contact your health care provider or call 8-1-1.

Take your child to your nearest hospital Emergency or call 911 if your child:

- Is having difficulty breathing
- Has blue lips or skin, or appears very pale
- Is coughing excessively, particularly with a fever
- Is vomiting excessively, especially if there is blood in the vomit
- Has diarrhea and vomiting and is not producing tears, and has not urinated for several hours
- Has a high fever, appears very sleepy, and has not improved with acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil).
- Is under three months of age and has a fever of greater than 38 degrees C (100.4 degrees F)