

## COVID-19 Testing in Industrial Camps: Guidance for camp operators

In industrial work camps, COVID-19 outbreaks have the potential to affect large numbers of people, overwhelm local health services, require multiple evacuations for hospitalization, and contribute to spread in other nearby communities. Prompt testing of anyone with symptoms is important in order to identify the need for enhanced infection control measures, and to plan early for possible evacuations in the event of serious illness.

### Who Needs Testing?

- Anyone who develops **COVID-19-like symptoms** should be tested for COVID-19.
  - Symptoms may include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, painful swallowing, runny nose, nasal congestion, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting.
- People with no symptoms should **not** be tested.
- Consult BCCDC's [current COVID-19 testing guideline](#) for the most recent testing criteria.

### Where Should Testing Occur?

- **Symptomatic camp workers who are well enough to remain in camp should be tested in camp**, in order to maintain isolation in place and avoid the risk of unnecessary transportation. The camp operator must assist with the logistics of testing, including transportation of necessary supplies. Instructions for arranging testing in the camp setting are provided on the following pages.
- **Alternatively, workers can be tested at a Northern Health [COVID-19 Collection Centre](#) if strict isolation can be easily maintained during transportation.**
  - For example, if the camp is close to a community where Northern Health provides services, and the worker can easily travel non-stop to and from a testing site, alone or otherwise in strict isolation.
  - The worker can be referred for testing in the community by contacting Northern Health's COVID-19 Online Clinic (**1-844-645-7811**), or their primary care provider.
- Call 8-1-1 if it is unclear whether someone is well enough to remain in camp, and the camp does not have independent access to health care providers who can make this assessment.
- Call 9-1-1 and activate the camp's medical evacuation protocols if it is a medical emergency.

## How to Prepare for Testing in Camp

### If the camp has trained staff who can collect nasopharyngeal swabs:

- Consider procuring a small stock of testing supplies in advance.
  - This is particularly valuable if the camp has 50 or more people on site at once, and infrequent access to transportation (e.g. no road access, flights twice a week or less).
  - Camps that are small, or have frequent access to transportation, do not need to stock testing supplies in advance, but can bring them into camp if and when the need arises.
- Necessary supplies include:
  - [Swabs that are approved for COVID-19 testing in BC](#)
  - Biohazard specimen bags
  - Appropriate containers for safe packaging and shipping
  - Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the staff that will collect the specimens
  - Printed copies of [laboratory requisitions](#)
- Supplies should be procured from private suppliers. A [local Northern Health laboratory](#) may also be able to provide limited quantities of supplies, if private suppliers are unable to do so.
- A stock of six swabs is sufficient for most camps. Replenish supplies as needed. Do not stockpile large quantities of supplies in advance, as this will put unnecessary strain on supply chains and healthcare systems.

### If no trained staff are available who can collect nasopharyngeal swabs in the camp:

- Complete kits for self-collection of specimens are available at certain [Northern Health laboratory locations](#). When a medical provider determines that a worker needs a test, the camp operator should call the local laboratory in advance to schedule a pickup.

### Prepare for safe transportation of collected specimens:

- The risk associated with transporting specimens is very low. A swab in a closed container is far less infectious than a person with COVID-19 infection.
- Nevertheless, specimens collected from workers for COVID-19 testing are considered biological specimens, and therefore must be packaged and transported in compliance with [Transportation of Dangerous Goods \(TDG\) Category B](#) requirements, in order to protect transportation staff and comply with federal legislation.
- Specimens must be packaged and transported by trained and certified staff, in clearly labelled containers that control any risk of breakage and release during transportation.
- Organizations offering TDG training are listed on the [Transport Canada web site](#). Training is available online, inexpensive, and takes just a few hours.

## Infection Control

- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms, and until those symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer.
- A person who only has a lingering dry cough, or who only has symptoms that are consistent with their normal seasonal allergies (e.g. runny nose, sneezing, or itching), does not require ongoing self-isolation beyond 10 days if their other symptoms have resolved.
- A person who tests negative should discuss the result with their health care provider before ending self-isolation, to ensure there is no concern about a false negative result or any other reason for ongoing self-isolation.
- If COVID-19 is ruled out by testing, the person can normally end self-isolation when their symptoms resolve, without waiting a minimum of 10 days.
- For more complete guidance on the prevention and control of COVID-19 in camp settings, consult [current guidance published by the Provincial Health Officer for industrial camps](#).

## How to Test in Camp

### 1. Protect the worker's privacy and confidentiality

Throughout the testing process, the privacy of the person being tested must be protected. Knowledge of the identity of the person being tested should be kept to the absolute minimum, on a strict need-to-know basis, and held in strict confidence.

### 2. Facilitate contact with a medical provider (physician or nurse practitioner)

People with symptoms must first be evaluated by a medical provider. If the camp does not have its own independent medical provider, symptomatic workers can be evaluated by calling the Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic at **1-844-645-7811**.

The medical provider will complete a laboratory requisition, which is necessary for a laboratory to process the specimen(s). A blank requisition may be filled out in the camp at the direction of the provider, a completed requisition may be sent electronically and printed at the camp, or a completed requisition can be shipped to the camp with the testing supplies.

Laboratory requisitions and specimens must be labelled with patient information, including their PHN, and a testing code: **TRE** for tree-planting camps, or **CGT** for all other work camps.

### 3. Procure testing supplies, if needed

If the supplies needed for testing are not already available at the camp, contact the nearest [Northern Health laboratory location](#) for supplies. The camp operator is responsible for picking up supplies from Northern Health, and transporting the supplies to and from the camp.

The type of supplies needed will depend on whether there are trained staff available in the camp who can collect a nasopharyngeal swab (see details on page 2, above).

#### **4. Specimen collection by trained staff (preferred where available)**

Nasopharyngeal swab collection can be performed by any health care worker who has been trained to do so (e.g. nurse, paramedic, first aid attendant). This requires use of PPE, as per [current BCCDC guidelines](#).

#### **5. Specimen self-collection by the worker (alternative approach)**

If trained staff are not available on site, Northern Health will provide a self-collection kit, which includes three specimens: a nasal swab, a throat swab, and a saliva specimen. The worker collects their own specimens, following the [instructions](#) in the kit.

Note that if the specimen is collected improperly, the test result may be invalid, and the test will have to be repeated. The collection process may be observed by a third party (from a safe distance), such as the person responsible for infection control or first aid in the camp, to support adherence to the instructions and ensure a valid test. This is not a strict requirement.

#### **6. Transport the specimen and requisition back to Northern Health**

As soon as possible after the specimen is collected, transport the collected specimen(s) and the laboratory requisition, together, to the nearest [Northern Health laboratory location](#). Call ahead to verify hours for specimen drop-off, which may be longer than the hours posted online.

If available, package the specimen in a cooler with a cool gel pack or ice pack. If this is not feasible or it would introduce delays, swabs may be transported at ambient temperature.

Package and transport specimens in accordance with [TDG Category B](#) requirements, as discussed previously (page 2).

**For more detailed testing procedures and documentation requirements, please see [BCCDC's current COVID-19 testing guidelines](#) and [self-collection guidelines](#).**

### **If COVID-19 Is Confirmed**

All positive results are reported both to the ordering provider and, simultaneously, to Northern Health's Medical Health Officers by the testing laboratory. Northern Health's Public Health team will follow up directly with the affected individual and their close contacts, in a confidential manner.

If the Medical Health Officer determines that a cluster of confirmed COVID-19 cases in a camp constitutes an outbreak, additional reporting and infection control measures will be required.