Types of COVID-19 Tests

Below are the types of tests available to diagnose and screen for COVID-19, as well as the correct medical terminology and intended use.

Please share with health care teams to avoid confusion as testing strategies evolve.

PREFERRED AND MOST SENSITIVE:

Standard PCR Testing: Lab results within 24-72 hours
- Diagnostic test for COVID-19, supported by Care Directives
- Sample types:
  - Nasopharyngeal (NP swab)
  - Throat/Oropharyngeal and Nares (T/N or OP/N swab)
  - Gargle

Rapid PCR Testing: Lab results within 4-6 hours
- Diagnostic test for COVID-19
- Requires order from authorized prescriber or a care directive
- Limited availability, for urgent/emergent needs
- STAT testing with GeneXpert platform
- Sample types:
  - NP swab preferred
  - Throat and nares swab alternate

LESS SENSITIVE:

POCT (Point of Care Testing): Results within 15 minutes
- Screening tool only, positive results require follow-up PCR test to confirm diagnosis
- Not adequately sensitive to rule out COVID-19 in symptomatic or exposed individuals
- Supported by Care Directives
- Used largely as a screening tool in asymptomatic people without known COVID-19 risks (ie., in pop-up clinics, at PACs that offer asymptomatic testing)
- POCT machines currently available at Nova Scotia Health:
  - Abbott ID NOW™
  - Abbott Panbio™
  - BD Veritor™

For more information, refer to LAB Testing for COVID-19 – FAQ