

Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the collection of specimens - COVID-19 naso/oropharyngeal or nasal swabs (RAT or PCR) during Omicron outbreak

23 August 2022

This guidance is based on infection prevention and control best practice with regards to Standard and Transmission-based Precautions¹.

The wearing of PPE is to mitigate infectious risk posed to the healthcare worker during close proximity when collecting a nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal or nasal swab for PCR or RAT. Guidance is also provided for when supervising or distributing a RAT.

Always perform hand hygiene when donning, doffing and disposal of PPE². Sessional use of PPE is recommended where possible (see further below).			
Action/What/Where	PPE	General advice	Sessional use of PPE³
Undertaking multiple PCR or RAT tests - outdoor areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical mask - Eye protection - Gown (optional) - Gloves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a well ventilated space - Stand slightly to the side of the patient (not directly in front of them) when taking the swab - Advise person to pull mask down to just under their nose - Take swab - Move away when the procedure is completed - Advise person to pull mask back up to cover nose 	<p>Medical masks, P2/N95 particulate respirators, eye protection⁴ and gowns can be worn for the duration of a session – change if damp, contaminated or more than 4 hours use.</p> <p>Gloves – these must be changed between each person encounter and hand hygiene performed before donning new gloves.</p>
Undertaking PCR or RAT tests – indoor, close confined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - P2/N95 particulate respirator - Eye protection - Gown (optional) - Gloves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise person to pull mask down to just under their nose - Take swab - Move away when the procedure is completed - Advise person to pull mask back up to cover nose 	<p>Gloves – these must be changed between each person encounter and hand hygiene performed before donning new gloves.</p>

¹ See information on Standard and Transmission-based Precautions: [Infection prevention and control](#)

² See donning and doffing guidance: [COVID-19: Infection prevention and control recommendations for health and disability care worker](#)

³ See information on sessional use: [COVID-19: Infection prevention and control recommendations for health and disability care worker](#)

⁴ Face shield, safety glasses or goggles (can be re-processed and reused) – prescription glasses are not classed as eye protection

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Supervising a person undertaking a self-test with a RAT - outdoor areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Medical mask- Eye protection- Hand hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain at least 1 m physical distance from person and use well ventilated space where possible.
Supervising a person undertaking a self-test with a RAT - indoor, close confined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- P2/N95 particulate respirator- Eye protection- Hand hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain at least 1 m physical distance from person
Distributing RAT kits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Medical mask- Eye protection (optional)- Hand hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain at least 1m physical distance from person