

Specimen collection for COVID-19 in the community health setting

These are interim recommendations and may be subject to change as more information becomes available.

- Limit the number of persons present in the room to the absolute minimum required for the patient's care and support.
- Collect ONE flocked nasopharyngeal swab (thin flexible type) in viral transport media, or dry flocked swab, or flocked swab in liquid Amies. First swab the throat and then the nasopharynx. Only one tube should be sent to pathology.
- Send specimens to ACT Pathology or Capital Pathology for fastest turnaround time. Results will generally be available within 48 hours; however, as demand for testing increases, results may take longer.

For patients with mild respiratory symptoms or no respiratory symptoms:

- Specimens should be collected using contact and droplet precautions (disposable gown, gloves, eye protection, and surgical mask). Perform hand hygiene before donning PPE.
- Stand slightly to the side of the patient to avoid exposure to respiratory secretions should the patient cough or sneeze.
- At completion of specimen collection, remove gloves and perform hand hygiene, then remove eyewear, gown and mask, taking care not to touch the front of any item. Perform hand hygiene again. Wearing a new pair of gloves, wipe any contacted surfaces with a combination detergent/disinfectant product. If your PPE includes goggles with a reusable frame, remember to wipe down the frame. Dispose of PPE in a clinical waste bin.
- There is no need to leave the room vacant for 30 minutes after specimen collection.
- Request coronavirus PCR for specific COVID-19 testing. Only order testing for other respiratory viruses if the patient has risk factors for severe viral respiratory disease (e.g. immunocompromised patients, pregnant women).
- All specimens collected should be regarded as potentially infectious.
- New PPE should be worn for each patient.
- Place specimens for transport in leak proof specimen bags that have a separate sealable pocket for the specimen (plastic biohazard specimen bag), with the patient's label on the specimen container, and a clearly written request form documenting suspected COVID-19.
- Testing will be triaged according to clinical notes on the pathology request slip. Please include as much information as possible about travel, contact with confirmed cases, and symptoms.
- Send specimens via courier if possible. If necessary, patients can be asked to drop off their own specimens at a pathology collection centre. They must be advised to wear a mask.

- If you don't wish to collect specimens yourself, you can refer to a suitable Capital Pathology collection centre for testing (listed at the end of this document). Please call ahead or ask the patient to call ahead. The patient should wear a mask, and use private transport if possible.
- You can also send patients to a designated Respiratory Assessment Clinic for COVID-19 testing. It is not necessary to call ahead. Note that when patients attend these clinics, they will be assessed and will **only be tested if they meet the suspect case definition**. If you suspect COVID-19 in a patient who falls outside the suspect case definition, please refer to Capital Pathology.
- The ACT Respiratory Assessment Clinics are located at:
 - The **Weston Creek Walk-in Centre** (24 Parkinson St, Weston). Open 7:30 am – 10:00 pm daily, including public holidays.
 - The **Drive through Respiratory Assessment Clinic** at Exhibition Park in Canberra (Flemington Rd & Northbourne Ave, Mitchell). Open 9:30 am – 6:00 pm daily. Patients must be driving or a passenger in a registered motor vehicle or motorbike to attend this clinic. It cannot be accessed from public transport or on foot.

For patients with severe symptoms suggestive of pneumonia, defined as either (a) fever and difficulty breathing, or (b) severe, frequent or productive cough, or for patients requiring sputum collection:

- These patients require specimen collection using contact and airborne precautions, which should be done in a negative pressure room in a hospital setting.
- All patients meeting these clinical criteria should be referred to The Canberra Hospital Emergency Department for clinical assessment, investigation and management. Do not collect specimens. Please phone ahead and inform the Emergency Department. If sending the patient by ambulance, notify the ambulance of the suspected diagnosis.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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Collection centres that can provide specimen collection for COVID-19

Capital Pathology:

CENTRE	ADDRESS	PHONE	MON – FRI	WEEKEND
Ainslie	Shop 9/11 Edgar Street, Ainslie	6247 3789	0800–1600	Closed
Barton	Suite 5/3 Sydney Avenue, Barton	6273 4505	0730–1600	Closed
Calvary (Bruce)	Pathology Suite, Calvary Private Hospital, Mary Potter Cct, Bruce	6251 5121	0800–1700	Closed
Civic	Ground Floor, Tenancy 6, 34 Marcus Clarke St, Canberra	6248 0899	0800–1600	Closed
Crace	Unit 6, 3 Baratta Street, Crace	6242 0004	0800–1200, 1300–1600	Closed
Deakin	Peter Yorke Building, 173 Strickland Crescent, Deakin	6285 3765	0730–1730	Closed
Dickson	Dickson Professional Centre, Cnr Antill and Cowper Streets, Dickson	6248 7804	0730–1800	Sat 0730–1200
Gungahlin	Unit 1/32 Hinder Street, Gungahlin	6242 8328	0730–1800	Sat 0730–1330 Sun 1000–1300
Gungahlin (IPN)	Gungahlin Family Healthcare, 2 Franz Bormann Close, Gungahlin	6253 8194	0800–1200	Closed
Hawker	Unit 7 Birubi Chambers, Cnr Beetaloo St & Hawker Pl, Hawker	6255 2241	0730–1730	Sat 0730–1200
Holt	Units 1 and 2, 10 Holt Place, Holt	4247 1258	0800–1600	Closed
Majura Park	Majura Park Medical Centre, 21 Mustang Ave, Majura	6248 5102	Tu, We & Th 0800–1200	Closed
O'Connor	Unit 1, Ground Floor, 15 Sargood St, O'Connor	6285 9926	0730–1630	Closed
Phillip	Suite 11, Corinna Chambers, 36–38 Corinna St, Phillip	6232 4031	0800–1600	Closed
Tuggeranong	Unit 5, Tuggeranong Square, Reed Street, Greenway	6293 3860	0730–1730	Sat 0730–1330
Wanniassa	Suite 5, Erindale Chambers, Grattan Court, Wanniassa	6296 1644	0730–1700	Sat 0730–1200
Woden	Brindabella Specialist Centre, Dann Close, Garran	6281 7277	0730–1930	Sat 0730–1330 Sun 1000–1300