

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

### Taking Your Student For a Mouth Rinse & Gargle COVID-19 Test



This information can also be found on the BCCDC website at: [bccdc.ca/covid19](https://bccdc.ca/covid19)

B.C. is rolling out a new COVID-19 testing option for school-aged students 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 for COVID-19 and will replace the swab test for most students. Here is some information about the process if you have to take your student 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. Please use [the COVID-19 assessment tool](#) (<https://bc.thrive.health>) to determine if your child should seek testing.

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

2. Call Island Health's COVID-19 Test Call Centre number is: **1-844-901-8442 (open 7-days a week)** to book a test near you.

NOTE: Our COVID-19 Call Centre can experience high call volumes. Wait times tend to be busiest in the morning, so you may be required to hang up and try back at later time. In BC, people who do not have symptoms are not being tested. If you do not have symptoms, but have [questions about COVID-19](#), visit the [BCCDC website](#).

3. **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](#)
  - If you'd prefer to print instructions, you can find them for [children](#) and [youth](#).
4. **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.
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 **one hour** before the mouth rinse and gargle test.
  - Your child should not practice the swish, gargle and spit method in the **two hours** before the test as 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](#).

## ACCESSING TEST RESULTS

**Have your personal health number handy for any of the following options:**

- Call Island Health’s Lab Call Centre at **1-866-370-8355**, Monday to Friday, 7am—6pm, Saturdays and Statutory Holidays 8am—4pm.
- Call BC’s COVID-19 Negative Results Line at **1-833-707-2792**, 8:30am—4:30pm, 7-days a week.
- Sign up online for results by text message at the [BCCDC Test Results page](#).
- Results for minors (ages 13-18) can only be given to them, in accordance with British Columbia’s *Infants Act*. If a parent calls for result, the youth must be present to give verbal consent to release them.
- We strongly recommend minors seek the support of a trusted adult when obtaining results to ensure any follow-up instructions are clearly understood.

## UNDERSTANDING TEST RESULTS

- **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. insufficient or poor quality sample, leaked sample, error in labelling/requisition). You will need to recollect another sample for testing.

## **RETURNING TO SCHOOL**

**If your child tests negative**, they can stop isolating and return to school once they do not have a fever and other symptoms have improved.

- If your child tests negative but had been in contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive, they (child) will need to complete the full 10-day self-isolation period.

**If your child tests positive**, a public health nurse will provide instructions, including when they can end isolation.

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

**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)