

Go-To Guide for testing people with a disability for COVID-19

Who is this information for?

Healthcare workforce including service providers and health professionals, living and working within metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, Australia.

3-tiered model for testing people with a disability for COVID-19

The Centre for Developmental Disability Health created a 3-tiered model approach to assist the healthcare workforce to better support, manage and appropriately test people with disabilities for COVID-19 based on their individual needs. The 3-tiered approach provides an overview of each level of testing and the care that should be taken throughout. The model is as follows:

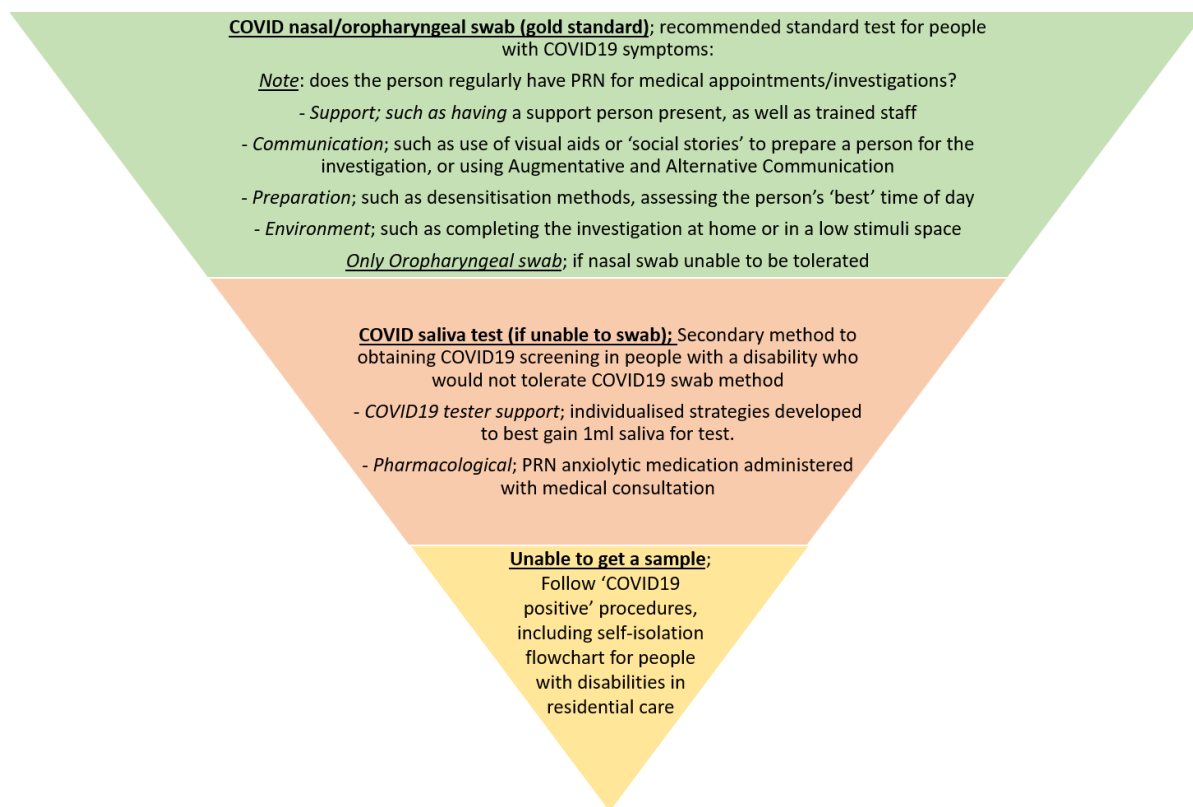


Figure 1: 3-tiered model for testing people with a disability for COVID-19

Thinking it through...



Figure 2: Clinically thinking for testing people with a disability for COVID-19

Types of testing:

These include **COVID nasal/oropharyngeal swab** and **COVID saliva test**. Further information has been provided to determine the type of testing for COVID -19 for the person with disability.

COVID nasal/oropharyngeal swab:

Consider the environment that will best meet the person's needs. Completing the testing at home is less confronting than having to wait at a clinic or hospital, which may cause anxiety due to negative or traumatic experiences. Provide a low stimuli space with little distractions.

Assess the person's 'best' time of day e.g. after breakfast, before going for a walk. They may be more likely to cooperate with testing, than if they are tired or distracted by something going on around them.

Educating a person with a disability can be done in many ways. Keep the information simple such as the use of pictures and social stories to suit the person's learning needs. Explain the reason for having the test, what to expect and why it is important. This may need to be discussed, presented or modelled several times, to allow desensitisation.

When supporting the individual during testing, reassure them you are there, and they are ok and being positive about the process, is important. Having something that is familiar and/or provides comfort to the individual to have with them during testing can be helpful.

Resources to support a person when undergoing testing, but not limited to include:

- [Having a test for Coronavirus – a pictorial resource](#)
- [Having a test in a car – easy read and symbols](#)
- [Having a test in hospital – easy read and symbols](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing Visual Guide – a social story](#)
- [Medical testing social story](#)

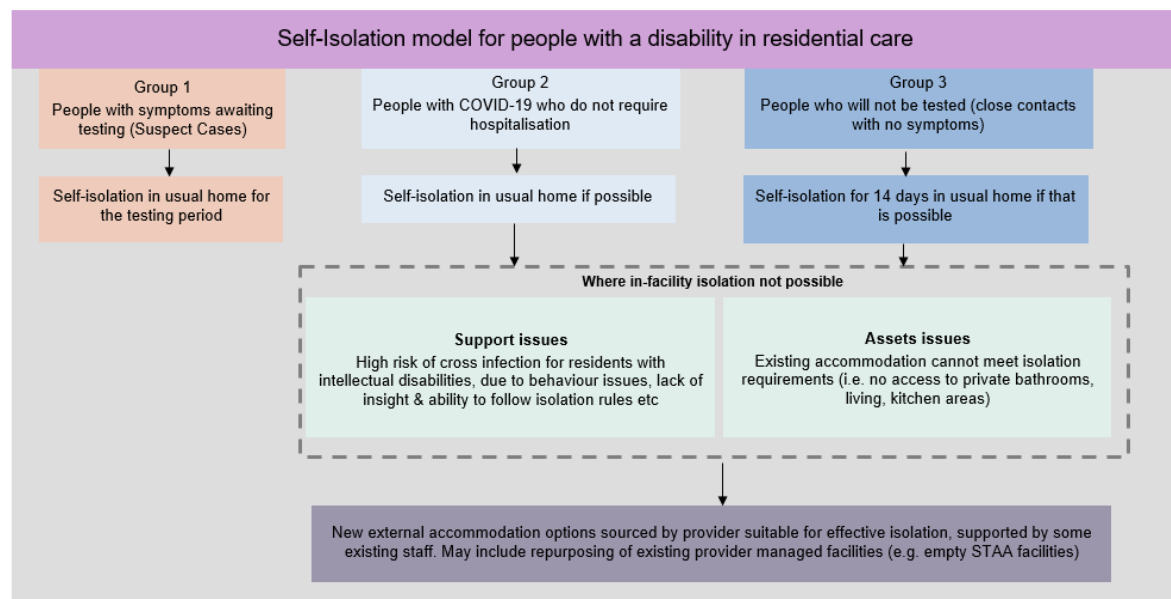
COVID Saliva test: A saliva test requires the person to be able to provide a 1ml sample of saliva through spitting. Check if the person can spit out toothpaste, and if so, they are probably able to spit saliva. Using visuals and modelling how to spit can also be done. If the person is not able to spit saliva, determine if they will tolerate a syringe in their mouth to obtain a saliva sample.

Pharmacological support: Check if the person has been prescribed anxiolytic PRN to help cope with medical tests or health screens. If not, it may be helpful to discuss this as a possibility with the individual's GP, to assist with tolerating a swab test.

Unable to get a sample

If the testing process is too stressful for the person and all testing alternatives have been considered, they will be required to isolate at home. Further information is available at [Information for support workers and carers on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for people with disability](#). Please review figure 2 on page 3.

Self-Isolation Flowchart



OFFICIAL



Figure 3: Self-Isolation Framework for people with a disability for COVID-19

What to do if the person with a disability receives a positive test result for COVID-19

If a person with a disability has tested positive for coronavirus, they must isolate until released from isolation by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services will make contact and advise what the person must do. Please refer to the document *Information for support workers Fact Sheet (COVID-19)* for [further information](#).

Summary

Overall, people with disabilities present with various needs that require attention and support from healthcare professionals and their caregivers (paid or family) when presenting for COVID-19 testing. Ensuring the person is comfortable, understands what is going to happen and what happens after the test has been completed is vital. If you require further information, please review current guidelines provided by the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) and/or contact the [Centre for Development Disability Health](#) (03 9792 8042).