



College of Respiratory
Therapists of Ontario

Ordre des thérapeutes
respiratoires de l'Ontario

COVID TESTING CENTRES

Practice FAQs

October 2020

QUESTION

The RT's at our organization are being relocated to work in the COVID testing centres. Are RTs permitted to perform Nasally Pharyngeal (NP) swabs?

ANSWER

Yes, RTs are permitted to perform Nasally Pharyngeal (NP) swabs.

There are different interpretations at the regulatory level regarding NP swabs, both that it is part of the public domain and that it is a controlled act. The CRTO's position is that if the performance of NP swabs is a controlled act, and that if the arrangement is temporary, it would fall under the *emergency exception* in the *Regulated Health Professions Act* [RHPA, s.29(a)]. However, if it is the organization's intention to have RTs perform NP swabs on an ongoing basis, establishing a delegation process would be the most appropriate option moving forward.

NP swabs are within the scope of practice of Respiratory Therapy, provided that it is being done to assess "*cardio-respiratory and associated disorders*". RTs have the authority to intubate and suction "*beyond the point in the nasal passages where they normally narrow or beyond the larynx*" and, therefore, are likely well suited for this task.

Training is required to ensure that the RT has the necessary competencies to perform the task within their knowledge, skills and judgement. A valid authorizing mechanism must be in place, such as a direct order or a medical directive.

If you have any further questions regarding this or any other practice-related matter, please contact Carole Hamp RRT, Deputy Registrar at hamp@crto.on.ca.