



## Tips for Testing Children for SARS-CoV-2 At Home

October 26, 2021

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH) developed these tips for parents and caregivers who may need to test children at home. They will be posted at [sfdcp.org/covidtest](https://www.sfdcp.org/covidtest). For more information about at-home tests, including when it may be alright to use one and how to understand test results, see the [Interim Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 At-Home Self-Testing](#). **Follow instructions from your doctor, school, or program about what type of test they will accept. Read and follow all the instructions that come with your at-home test. They may be different than the tests used in the resources below.**

### Tips for Testing Children at Home<sup>1</sup>

- **Keep it calm.** It may help your child feel calmer if only one person is talking to them about the test at a time. If it helps your child, you can turn the lights down for the test.
- **Talk it through.** Using words they can understand at their age, tell them why they need to take the test. If they want to know, tell them, step-by-step, what will happen when you do the test.
- **Let them feel what they are feeling.** It is okay for them to feel afraid, angry, or worried about the test, and it may help them feel better if you say this out loud.
- **Give them comfort and choices.** Let them pick something they like to hold or look at during the test. You can also sing a song together, count, or talk about something they like.
- **Get help.** If there is another adult your child trusts who can help you do the test, it can be helpful to have one adult hold your child while you swab your child's nose. This depends on how old your child is and how easy it is for them to sit still. For example, a preschool-aged child might feel more relaxed sitting in a parent or caregiver's lap. The parent or caregiver can wrap a leg around the child's legs and hold the child's arms still with their arms, and the other adult can help to hold the child's head still while swabbing their nose.
- **Know when to take a break.** If your child is not able to stay still or is very upset, you may not be able to do the test safely or do it well enough to be able to trust that the test result is right. It is okay to take a break and try again with a new test when everyone is calm.
- **Praise.** Remember to praise your child after the test is done. It can be helpful to be specific (e.g., "You did a great job counting while I was rubbing your nose!").

### Other Home Testing Resources

For more tips on testing children, you can read these handouts from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: [this one is for testing in schools](#) and [this one is for health care workers](#), but both have advice that you can use for doing an at-home test. For a review on how to do the test with a child, watch [this video](#).

You may also want to look at [home testing guidance from the CDC](#) or watch a [how-to video from BinaxNOW](#) for more information.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: "Testing Children for COVID-19: Resources for Test Providers." Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Available at: <https://www.chop.edu/testing-children-covid-19-resources-test-providers>. (Last accessed: October 15, 2021.)