

TOP TIPS

Getting a COVID swab when a person has dementia

Here are some top tips from clinicians in dementia care from across the Yorkshire and Humber region, that might help when trying to obtain a COVID swab from a person with dementia.



EXPLAIN

Explain the full procedure so people know what to expect. Use language appropriate to the person and don't overwhelm people with words. Use pictures to help. Whilst swabbing keep explaining what you are doing and give clear instructions.

BE HONEST

Be honest that there might be some discomfort and explain the reason for the swab.



DEMONSTRATE

Demonstrate the process on yourself, another staff member, a doll or a teddy bear. Using mirroring to show how the swab will be taken.

PICK YOUR MOMENT

Wait until a the person is most engaging and distress is at a minimum. Be patient; revisiting it and taking time instead of rushing.



ENVIRONMENTAL CUES

Try in front of a mirror or after brushing teeth, this can help cue people to open their mouth. Ask the person to open their mouth wide, stick their tongue out and say "ahhh".

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DON'T RUSH

It's important to take your time and help the person feel calm. You could try relaxing activities that use touch first, such as massage, so the person feels at ease with you. Calm music might help some people. Make sure the person is seated and comfortable.



AFTER

Offer reassurance afterwards with clear facial expressions and tell the person how well they have done. If appropriate, offer tactile reassurance. Apologise for any discomfort. Have a cup of tea and say thank you afterwards.

TECHNICAL BIT

Slightly rotate the swab as you advance via the nose- this helps to pick up lubrication and eases passage of the swab to the nasopharynx. If you can ask the person to tilt their head back (70-degrees) to straighten the passage between the nose and the nasopharynx.



CAPACITY TO CONSENT

Where a person lacks capacity to consent to swabbing, then a best interest decision needs to be made to justify the reason to swab. That a person has dementia does not imply a lack of capacity to make decision in relation to consenting to swab

HAVE A PLAN

There will be times when it is not possible to get a swab. Have a plan for not being able to achieve the swab and to manage this, e.g., impact on discharge.

