

Process for COVID-19 testing prior to scheduled cancer treatment

Background

Guidance approved by National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) includes the use of COVID-19 (C19) testing in asymptomatic patients prior to certain scheduled treatments. It is not a 'rule-out' test and will be used alongside advice to patients on reducing their likelihood of C19 exposure in the two weeks prior to attendance and clinical review for signs and symptoms of disease.

The rationale for testing is that patients with C19 may be asymptomatic in the initial days of infection. Identification of asymptomatic C19 may be useful in patients in whom treatment could significantly increase their risk of severe C19 disease, i.e. major surgery or immunosuppressant therapies, and for procedures which are aerosol generating, to maximise protection of staff. In the event of virus detection, the decision to defer or proceed with treatment will rest with the treating team. The timing of a test prior to a procedure has been extended to up to 72hours, particularly to facilitate Friday testing for Monday procedures.

Indications for C19 testing in the cancer pathway

RT-PCR COVID-19 testing may be requested for certain patients undergoing cancer treatment, even if no symptoms of COVID, within 72 hours of the treatment/procedure. **The decision to request a COVID test prior to treatment will be made by the treating clinician.**

Examples of patients in which a test may be requested are those who are scheduled for:

- cancer surgery
- a radiation oncology procedure under anaesthesia, such as brachytherapy
- thyroid cancer treatment with radio-active iodine
- systemic anti-cancer therapy, concomitant chemoradiotherapy or radiotherapy, where a test is considered to inform the risk assessment regarding decision to proceed with treatment
- a diagnostic procedure considered high risk for exposure to staff, e.g. due to aerosol generation

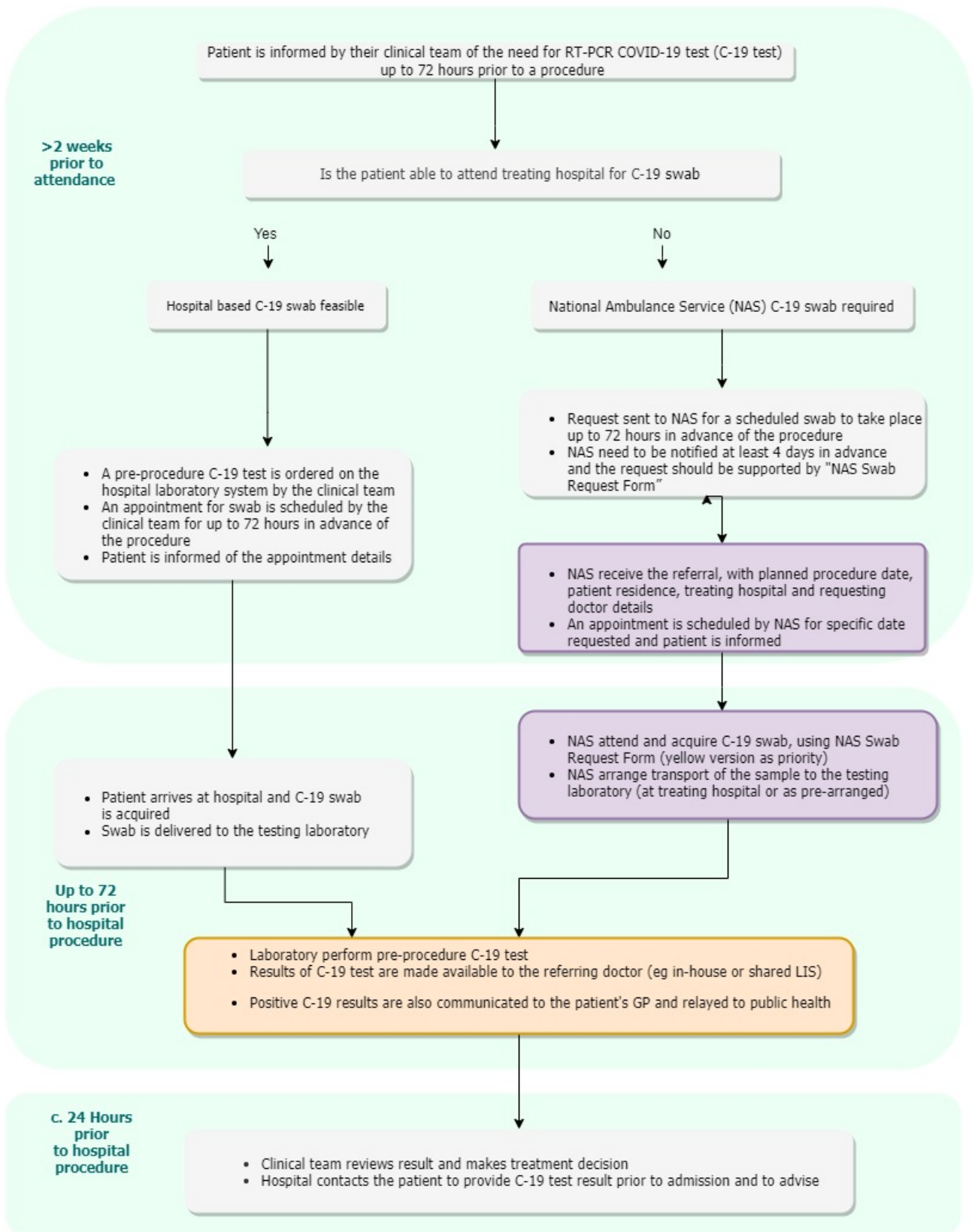
Guidance in relation to the potential role of COVID-19 testing in asymptomatic patients will be updated as required and maintained on the NCCP website www.hse.ie/cancer and the HSE clinical repository <https://hse.drsteevenslibrary.ie/Covid19V2/home>

At any stage, a patient will require testing if they develop symptoms and this should be prioritised for those on active cancer treatment.

Any patient with suspected cancer undergoing a scheduled diagnostic procedure under anaesthetic or undergoing a bronchoscopy (which is aerosol-generating) will need to follow a pathway such as this prior to their procedure. An additional area raised in which a C19 test may be required is prior to bone marrow biopsy, at the request of the laboratory, if the sample will undergo cell culture outside of a Containment Level 3 facility.

If the pre-procedure swab is to be taken by the National Ambulance Service, the request form and process in the Appendix should be followed. Notice of four days is recommended to allow for scheduling of the swab up to 72 hours prior to the procedure.

Interim pathway for COVID-19 test when required pre-op/pre-treatment





National Ambulance Service Swab Request for Scheduled Cancer Treatments

Appendix

National Ambulance Service Swab Request for Scheduled Cancer Treatments

This form is proposed for use by hospital services, when requesting a C19 swab in an asymptomatic patient, to be carried out by NAS up to 72 hours prior to a scheduled cancer treatment or procedure.

Details on form are to be completed and emailed to the NAS to the following email address: neoc.covid19@hse.ie with the subject heading: **“Covid 19 screening pre -scheduled cancer treatment”**.

Swab request should be sent once the treatment date is confirmed and it is known that the patient will require a NAS swab. The request should be sent a minimum of four days prior to the scheduled date of treatment.

NAS will print the request form on **yellow paper**, to ensure samples can be easily prioritised at the hospital laboratory reception.

Swab request form will also serve as the test request form. NAS to complete specimen collection details on same form, which then accompanies sample to the lab.



National Ambulance Service Swab Request for Scheduled Cancer Treatments

Email completed form to neoc.covid19@hse.ie with Subject Heading: 'Covid 19 Screening pre - Scheduled Cancer Treatment' *minimum of 4 days prior to date of scheduled treatment*

Acute Referral Form & Laboratory Request Form for Oncology Patients to be screened for Covid 19 by NAS	
	Details
Name of Acute Hospital, Address & Eircode	
Laboratory that the swab is to be delivered to, once completed	
Date of scheduled treatment	
Date swab required (ie up to 72hrs prior)	
Name of Person in Charge of Oncology Ward/Dept & Contact telephone number	
Following Paramedic Standard Clinical Assessment, Paramedic may need to contact Person in Charge of Oncology ward - Name & Telephone person for contact re: clinical findings/issues	
Referring Oncology Doctor's Name:	
Referring Oncology Doctor's Mobile Phone Number	
Patient's Hospital Number:	
Patient's Name: Date of Birth: Full Home Address with EIRCODE: Patients contact telephone number:	
GP Name GP Tel No GP Healthmail address (if available)	
*****All of the above details need to be completed as failure to complete all relevant information may result in a delay in tests being carried out. *****	
NAS use only	
Specimen type:	<i>Combined nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab</i>
Specimen date and time of completion:	DATE: TIME:
Sample taken by:	NAME: Signature: Date:
NAS CAD Number:	
Hospital Laboratory sample delivered to:	

Professor Cathal O'Donnell, NAS Medical Director