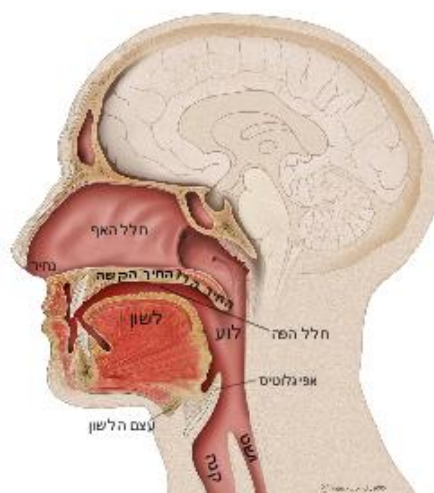


## Ruth's guide to having a COVID-19 test – that doesn't make your eyes water!

I want to encourage you all to be sure to have a COVID-19 test if you have the slightest of symptoms to help us get on top of this virus and to support the timely lifting of restrictions! I reckon you know by now that having a swab may not be the most fun you will have in your week (though it might be depending on your week!!) but from a nurse's perspective I would like to offer a few tips to assist in making this a "reasonably painless and easy" for both you and the nurse conducting it.

So first – an update on the anatomy of your nose and throat. Most of us assume the nasal cavity only goes up towards your eyes and not back towards your ears! But from the diagram below you can see it is quite a large cavity that opens right back towards your throat (in the direction of your ears!!)



The area at the back of your nasal cavity is where the nasal swab needs to go. A throat swab is better understood – you open your mouth wide and may be asked to poke your tongue out a bit (to get it out of the way!) and the back of your throat is swabbed. Occasionally this makes people gag, especially if you have a sensitive 'gag reflex'.

The picture below shows the nasal swab approach in context. It actually looks worse than it is if you follow a few of my tips to make it a less stressful event for everyone!



## Helpful tips!

Remain calm and relaxed (yes I know it's easy for me to say!)

The throat swab is done first – for the obvious reason that it goes into your nose next!

Open your mouth wide with your head tipped back a little (as instructed by the health professional taking the swab).

Take a breath or two after this then relax your head, tilted back a little, against the back of the car seat, chair, wall or whatever is behind you. This will help to keep you and your face both relaxed.

Breathe in and out through your mouth and avoid 'screwing up your face' – this is NOT a relaxed face and makes the procedure less pleasant for you both.

Keep your head supported and face relaxed as the swab is gently inserted into one nostril at a time and if you remain relaxed will glide in and out gently.

Then, in no time at all, it's all done and you are on your way home to self-isolate until you get the results back (assuming the test is because you have some mild symptoms). Test results usually only take one-two days so not long to wait for hopefully the all clear.

If you test positive you will be contacted with advice and support to undertake contact tracing and other important information needed to keep you, your family and friends and community safe.