

COVID-19 Testing:

Questions & Answers about swabs



The swab used for my COVID-19 test was sterilized with ethylene oxide. Is this safe?

Yes. Ethylene oxide is a gas commonly used to sterilize medical equipment, spices and cosmetics, as well as to make everyday items like laundry soap and shampoo.

Does any residue from the gas remain on the swab?

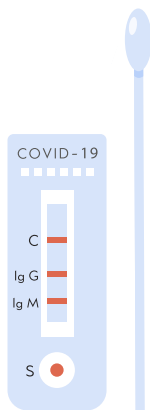
No. As a gas, ethylene oxide disperses at room temperature. It does not linger on a swab or other sterilized items.

Isn't ethylene oxide the main ingredient in antifreeze?

No, that's ethylene glycol. This incorrect antifreeze connection is one of several untrue claims circulating online. It is also untrue that moisture from the nose could "activate" the gas.

Can a swab sterilized with ethylene oxide cause cancer?

No. The gas only has the potential to cause cancer if it is inhaled in large amounts or for prolonged periods of time. Using a swab sterilized with ethylene oxide does not present a health risk, even when testing twice weekly.



Ethylene oxide is one of the most common sterilization tools, used by manufacturers to keep about half of all U.S. medical devices safe and germ-free.



For more about ethylene oxide, visit [FDA.gov](https://www.fda.gov).
For testing locations and vaccine appointments, visit [ShastaReady.org](https://www.shastaready.org).

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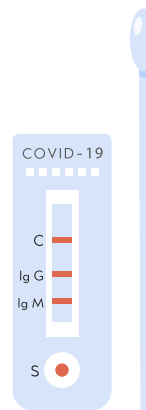
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