

## Preparing Your Loved One For A COVID Test

Medical testing can be a source of fear and anxiety for many, especially our loved ones with Down Syndrome. It is important to provide them with honest, straight forward information and prepare them for what the test will look and feel like and what they will encounter at the testing site.



1. Use simple language to explain COVID-19. For example, *“The coronavirus is a bit like the flu. It can cause fevers and coughing and can spread from person to person in different ways.”* ([www.chop.edu](http://www.chop.edu)). There is a variety of videos and social stories available online that are geared towards individuals with developmental disabilities and can help explain COVID-19 using appropriate imagery and language.
2. **Reassure** your loved one. Allow them to voice their concerns and **validate their feelings**. Create a safe space for them to ask questions. You can work together to create new coping strategies or use those that have worked in other anxiety provoking situations.
3. Provide your loved one with a **sense of control**. For example, allow them to choose a comfort object to bring with them or provide them with the opportunity to choose their reward / treat after the testing is complete.
4. Use **step-by-step social stories** to help illustrate what the process will look like. Topics can include:
  - a. Why we need to get a COVID test?
  - b. What the medical staff will be wearing and why.
  - c. What the Q-tip used to collect the sample will look like and how will it be used.
  - d. What can they do to keep calm and relaxed?
  - e. What reward / treat your loved one can look forward to after the test.
5. For loved ones that may have an extreme sensitivity to objects touching their face, you can take the opportunity to **practice** with a cotton swab/Q-tip at home.
  - a. Allow them to hold, touch and explore the Q-tip. Have them touch it to their face, nose, lips, and cheeks.
  - b. Model how the Q-tip will be inserted into the nose. Allow your loved one to practice on you and gradually work towards making them feel comfortable with it being inserted into their nose.
  - c. Use a countdown strategy so they know how long the Q-tip will be in the nose.
6. Maintain a calm, no stress attitude as this will help your loved one remain in that state. Listen to calm music while driving to and waiting in line for the test, work on deep breathing, and provide reassuring phrases such as *“this will be over soon”* or *“you are doing a great job”*.

For a sample social story and links to other resources to help prepare your loved one for the COVID-19 test please visit [www.dsrp.org](http://www.dsrp.org).