

# 'Saliva test method easier'

## Approval welcomed by those uncomfortable with nasal swabs

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**PETALING JAYA:** Screening for Covid-19 is now as easy as clearing your throat then spitting into a cup, and can even be done in the comfort of one's own home.

Special saliva test kits, which use deep-throat saliva samples to test for Covid-19, have been approved for use by the Health Ministry recently and is now being sold by My EG Services Sdn Bhd (MYEG).

This comes as good news to those uncomfortable with the current nasal swab test method where samples are taken by inserting a swab into the upper reaches of the nasal passage or to the back of the throat.

According to MYEG, the saliva test costs RM150 per person excluding delivery charges, and can be delivered straight to one's doorstep.

Covid-19 saliva tests have already been rolled out in the United States, which saw retailer Costco selling these at-home test kits which are then mailed to labs for diagnosis.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar, who has been a proponent for self-testing since the outset, said that such tests could save



money in the long run and also free up hospital frontliners.

"I'm happy to note that of late, the Health Ministry, especially the minister, has been quite receptive to move to new innovations and technologies much faster," he said.

"Implementation must be very clear, that is to perform (the saliva test) only as a screening tool and to do it repeatedly at least twice or better three times, on day zero, day three and day seven or 10," he said.

"It is good to deploy the saliva test kits, especially when there is a suspected cluster and also to contacts of

a positive case.

"For example, if a person at work or a student is confirmed positive, the Health Ministry can deploy the test kits to coworkers or classmates for them to do their own testing and only report back if positive," he said.

Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia president Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah said saliva tests may encourage more Malaysians to get tested as it is easier to do and non-invasive.

"Studies have shown that saliva tests are nearly as accurate as nasal and throat swabs to detect Covid-19.

**Easy does it:** Collecting a saliva sample in a cup may be preferred to the current nasal swab test for Covid-19.  
— FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

"But if we get a positive saliva sample or if you are really worried you may have Covid-19, the gold standard is still the nasal and throat swabs," he added.

On Feb 19, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba said the ministry had approved the use of deep throat saliva as test samples for the diagnosis of Covid-19.

While registering for the saliva test on the MYEG website, customers can opt to either do it at home, office or walk in to a BP Lab outlet.

On the date of the screening, on-site customers will have their sample containers delivered to them by MYEG "Saliva Ninjas".

Customers will be given a specimen bottle and specimen bags, and the saliva sample must be collected in a well-ventilated area at least two metres away from others.

Customers need only clear saliva from their throats and spit into the bottle before sealing it in bags.

The samples will then be collected by MYEG Saliva Ninjas and sent to a BP Lab.

Turnaround time for the result is 24 hours and customers will be able to receive their result through the MYEG QR app or the Doctor2U app.