

Saliva swabs may be more effective than nasal swabs for Omicron detection: Study

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Using swabs of the nasal or nasopharyngeal mucosa may be suboptimal for the Omicron variant



According to a recent study conducted by researchers in Cape Town, South Africa, saliva swabs are the preferred sample for Omicron detection.

The findings suggest that the pattern of viral shedding during the course of infection is altered for Omicron with higher viral shedding in saliva relative to nasal samples resulting in improved diagnostic performance of saliva swabs.

While functional change in terms of receptor binding is currently to be elucidated, the pattern of viral shedding and resulting impact on diagnostic sampling methods is currently unknown.

Omicron, in particular, has an extraordinary number of mutations, with at least 36 mutations across the genome, 30 of which are located in the spike protein and 15 in the receptor binding domain.