



Restart Your Research - Safe saliva collection in the COVID-19 era

Dear reader,

The pandemic has caused uncertainty around the world, also in the research community and especially in dealing with saliva samples. As a non-invasive sample material, saliva offers a wide range of analysis options, e.g. biomarkers on the subject of stress and sleep, markers on the immune status or the sex hormones. We have therefore put together short guidelines, which enable the safe collection and handling of saliva samples and which are easy to follow. With this, the Saliva Lab Trier would like to make a contribution to the fact that clinical research can continue its work - with the greatest possible safety for everyone involved.

Tip #1: Safe sample collection at home

If possible, samples should currently be taken at home. Our instructions are easy to understand and the collection systems are designed for high compliance so that participants can easily and safely take their samples, even without specialist staff. After sampling, participants should consider the following:

1. Close the collection tube properly and tightly.
2. Wipe off the outside of the tubes with disinfectant wipes or similar.
3. Place the samples in a small, transparent ziplock bag.
4. Store samples in a refrigerator or freezer (depending on the biomarker) until return.

To return the samples, participants should put the samples in a cooler bag with gel or cold packs and bring them to the institute. Alternatively, the samples can be sent back to the research facility or the laboratory (see tip # 3, depending on the biomarker).

Tip #2: Safe handling of saliva samples

So far, saliva like blood or other clinical samples, has been classified as a Category B substance (Biological Category B - UN3373) and routinely treated with simple handling protocols. At present, the staff of the research facility should observe the following when handling saliva samples:

1. Wear PPE (personal protective equipment), if necessary, with an FFP2 protective mask.
2. Check that the sample bag and collection tubes are properly closed.
3. Wipe or spray external surfaces with disinfectant or 70% alcohol.
4. Store samples in a storage box in the freezer at -20° or -80° C until shipment.

As soon as the sample collection has been completed, prepare the samples for shipment to the Saliva Lab Trier. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us for information on collecting, transporting, organizing, and storing saliva samples.

Tip #3: Safe packing and shipping of your samples

Category B biological samples - UN3373 are routinely shipped by major carriers at no extra charge. However, please note the respective requirements and carefully follow the procedures of the selected transport company. Important guidelines and information can be found in specific packing instructions (e.g. P 650 in Germany). Packing materials are readily available and can also be purchased online. Or you can contact the team at Saliva Lab Trier, we are also happy to assist you when sending samples.

Tip #4: Test your saliva samples at the Saliva Lab Trier

Our certified laboratory with standardized and uniform procedures makes it easier for researchers to obtain fast, precise and reliable results. The experienced team at Saliva Lab Trier ensures that all quality standards are met and continuously checked. Finally, we would like to point out once again that saliva collected from an infected participant carries a small, but existing risk of contamination by the SARS-COV-2 virus, e.g. through the outside of the sample tube. Freezing the collection tube does not reduce the virulence of the virus. We therefore recommend that all saliva samples taken from research participants only be handled with disposable gloves and that these are disposed of after use. This recommendation applies regardless of the collection system used, i.e. for passive drool samples or swab systems.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) and ask our specialist staff for support.
Stay healthy!

Your team at the Saliva Lab Trier

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Please note: Information can change rapidly in the COVID-19 pandemic. While these guidelines are updated with the latest knowledge, the recommendations may not apply to all researchers in all situations. As such, those involved should contact the appropriate agency or department for environmental health and safety for additional instructions on how to safely handle saliva samples and comply with federal, state, and local regulations.

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