

PHSA Laboratories

BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

October 25, 2021

RE: COPAN flocked swabs in UTM are preferred for HSV/VZV detection from skin and genital sites

COPAN regular size flocked swabs (FLOQSwabs®) collected in Universal Transport Medium (UTM-RT®) with beads are the preferred collection kit for identification of HSV-1, HSV-2, and VZV from skin and genital sites by RT-PCR testing. The COPAN flocked swabs in UTM are Health Canada approved for collection, transport, and preservation of clinical specimens for viral molecular diagnostic testing.

At the time of a swab shortage during the early COVID-19 pandemic waves, the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory validated the use of Hologic Aptima® Unisex and Multi-test swab collection kits for the HSV/VZV RT-PCR testing. However, these Hologic Aptima collection kits are not optimal for HSV/VZV detection and were intended to serve as a short-term solution due to swab shortages.

We now have an adequate inventory of COPAN flocked swabs in UTM and now require that clinics discontinue use of the Hologic Aptima® Unisex and Multi-test swabs for the collection of skin and genital samples for HSV/VZV RT-PCR testing. As such, we have stopped the distribution of these Hologic Aptima collection kits for this purpose.

We will continue to accept Hologic Aptima swabs for HSV/VZV RT-PCR testing until November 15/2021, to allow time for clinics to transition to the preferred COPAN flocked swabs in UTM for sample collection. After November 15/2021, we will no longer accept Hologic Aptima swabs for HSV/VZV RT-PCR testing and samples will be rejected.

Please note that Hologic Aptima Unisex and Multi-test collection kits are still the appropriate kits to use for *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* testing.

See Appendix 1 for pictures of acceptable and unacceptable swab kits for skin and genital sample collection for HSV-1, HSV-2, and VZV RT-PCR.

Sincerely,



Mel Krajden, MD, FRCPC
Public Health Laboratory Director
BC Centre for Disease Control



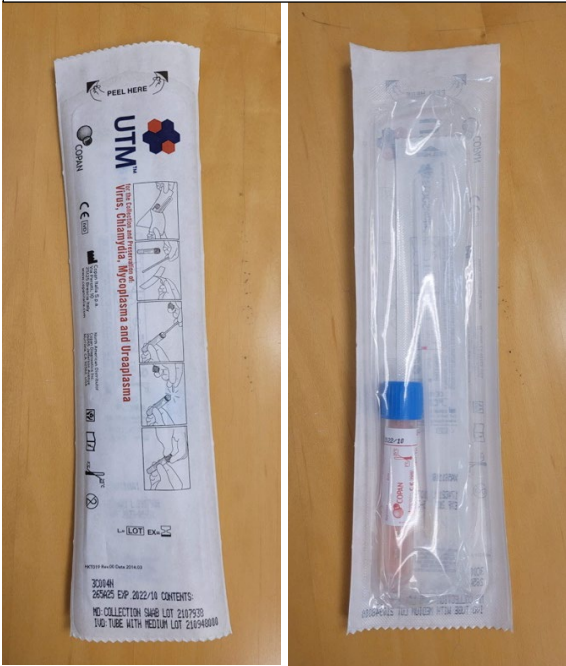
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Appendix 1.



Acceptable COPAN regular size flocked swabs (FLOQSwabs®) collected in Universal Transport Medium (UTM-RT®) for HSV/VZV RT-PCR



Unacceptable Hologic Aptima® Unisex and Multi-test swab collection kits for HSV/VZV RT-PCR

