Protecting children and ensuring their care – how is pooled PCR testing for coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) using the ‘lollipop’ method organised at daycares and primary schools?

In the daycare and school year 2021/2022, high priority continues to be given to ensuring in-person attendance in schools and daycares. Preventive pooled testing is aimed at minimising the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and spread through early detection and isolation of infected persons. This helps to keep the institutions open to ensure the care and education that is vital for the children’s healthy development. For the preventive testing of children in day cares and primary schools, the RKI recommends pooled PCR testing using ‘lollipop swabs’.

**1 Sampling at the daycare / primary school**

Samples are taken mornings twice a week at these facilities (‘lollipop’ method). Children and educators suck on a swab for 30 seconds as they would a lollipop.

This saliva test is easy to do and therefore enjoys a high acceptance among the children.

Each group/class’s swabs from children and staff are then collected (pooled) in a tube. This is carried out by an educator/teacher.

The tube is then labelled with the name of the facility and of the daycare group/class.

**2 Sample transport and pooled PCR testing**

The samples are taken to the lab. This is done by the lab’s in-house or contracted transport services or is organised by the facilities themselves.

The lab tests the pooled swabs using PCR analysis the same day.

Pool testing saves resources that would otherwise not suffice for regular testing of individual samples.

### NEGATIVE POOLED PCR TEST

**No SARS-CoV-2 detected**

Same-day transmission of the result to the person in charge of coronavirus testing (usually the head of the daycare/school), who shares it with the persons holding custody of the children.*

Everyone may return to the daycare/primary school the next day.

*some labs use a software that informs the head of the daycare/school and the parents/custodians by SMS of the result once it is recorded.

### POSITIVE POOLED PCR TEST

**At least one person is infected**

The lab informs the public health office. Same-day transmission of the result to the person in charge of coronavirus testing (usually the head of daycare/school), who shares it with the persons holding custody of the children.*

All children and staff have to stay home the next day and perform an individual swab.

*some labs use a software that informs the head of the daycare/school and the parents/custodians by SMS of the result once it is recorded.
What to do if a pooled PCR test is positive

3 Sampling for individual PCR retesting (pool resolution)

The children and staff in the daycare group/class who pool-tested positive perform another lollipop swab at home the next morning and place it in a tube labelled with their name (individual sample *).

Their custodians take the samples to the facility in the morning and hand them to the person in charge of coronavirus testing. This is ideally done outdoors and in compliance with the DHM+A rules.

* At the start of the programme, children and care staff who take part in lollipop pooled PCR testing are issued with individual-sample test kits to keep at home.

4 Sample transport and individual PCR testing

The individual samples from the positive pool are taken to the lab. This is done by the lab’s in-house or contracted transport services or is organised by the facilities themselves.

The lab tests the individual swabs using PCR analysis the same day. Same-day transmission of the test results.

NEGATIVE INDIVIDUAL PCR TEST

No SARS-CoV-2 infection detected
The public health office decides on further measures e.g. whether and who has to quarantine or whether the children who tested negative need to get tested more often while continuing to attend daycare/primary school.

POSITIVE INDIVIDUAL PCR TEST

SARS-CoV-2 infection detected
The public health office orders home isolation and decides on further measures, e.g. whether or not contact persons have to quarantine.

Further information on ‘lollipop’ pooled PCR testing (in German)

National Test Strategy – who gets tested in Germany for the presence of SARS CoV-2 infection?
www.rki.de/covid-19-teststrategie

Answers to frequently asked questions concerning the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus/COVID-19
www.rki.de/covid-19-faq