

9 September 2021

Ngaire Corley

By email: [fyi-request-16390-ba66ca8c@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-16390-ba66ca8c@requests.fyi.org.nz)  
Ref: H202110442

Tēnā koe Ngaire

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your requests under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 12 August 2021 for:

*“Please provide evidence of the diagnostic specificity of SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR “testing”:  
What are the specific features of Covid-19 that make it a definable disease?”*

Diagnostic specificity of nasopharyngeal swabs to detect SARS-CoV-2 by RT-PCR method is very high, more than 99%, as reported in a systematic review in the Journal of the American Medical Association ([www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2775397](http://www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2775397)), analysis by the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics ([www.blog.ons.gov.uk/2021/04/09/accuracy-and-confidence-why-we-trust-the-data-from-the-covid-19-infection-survey/](http://www.blog.ons.gov.uk/2021/04/09/accuracy-and-confidence-why-we-trust-the-data-from-the-covid-19-infection-survey/)), and the Centers for Disease Control in the United States ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html)).

People with COVID-19 may experience fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headaches, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhoea (CDC, WHO, Australia). Complications of COVID-19 may include respiratory failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), sepsis and septic shock, thromboembolism, and/or multiorgan failure, including injury of the heart, liver, or kidneys (WHO). While these symptoms and complications are also found in other respiratory illnesses, laboratory tests detecting SARS-CoV-2 will confirm the diagnosis of COVID-19.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Nāku noa, nā



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