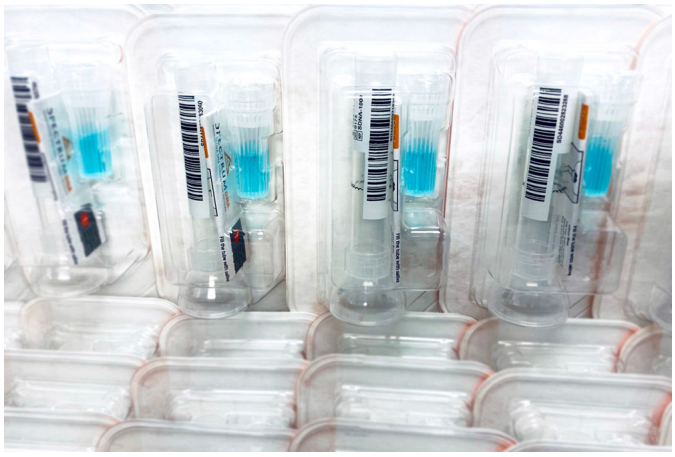
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SANTA FE — The New Mexico Department of Health, evolving with the demands of COVID-19, will begin administering an FDA-approved COVID test that involves swabbing the mouth to collect a saliva sample. The department started offering the test in Albuquerque at Balloon Fiesta Park Nov. 23.

NMDOH is collaborating with Curative, a research company in California that has created the first oral fluid test in the U. S. The saliva samples have been demonstrated to be at least as accurate as the more traditional nasopharyngeal test swab.

The tests will be self-collected — meaning they do not require a trained health care worker to administer — but trained personnel will be present when and where these tests are made available to ensure samples are properly collected.

“We continue to look for better and more innovative ways to serve New Mexicans amid this pandemic,” Acting Department of Health Secretary Billy Jimenez said. “We are excited to provide faster, more convenient methods of COVID-19 testing to the public.

“The saliva test is less invasive to clients, reduces exposure to healthcare workers, alleviates some of the strain on our labs and will hopefully reduce the burden of PPE usage in our state,” Jimenez said.

As with all COVID-19 tests in New Mexico, these tests will be administered for free; clients must pre-register at curative.com.