

COVID-19 Nasopharyngeal Specimen Collection Procedure

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs are used for the detection of respiratory viruses such as influenza, RSV, and other respiratory viral pathogens including the 2019-nCoV (SARS-CoV-2).

1. Assemble supplies:
 - a. Obtain 1 Remel M4-RT viral transport medium
 - b. Obtain 1 Puritan (Copan) sterile swabs w/ flexible aluminum shaft
2. Explain procedure to patient.
3. If the patient has a lot of mucous in his/her nose, ask the patient to use a tissue to gently clean out visible nasal mucous before collecting specimen. Respiratory viruses are located in cells that line the surface of nasal mucosa. The virus is not found in the mucous discharge.
Instruct the patient to wash hands using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
4. Wash your hands using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
5. Don appropriate PPE.

NP Swab Collection

6. Tilt patient's head back approximately 70 degrees (See figure).
7. Gently insert the swab along the nasal septum just above the floor of the nasal passage. Advance the swab with a slow, steady motion until the posterior nasopharynx has been reached (distance from nostrils to external opening of ear).
8. Once resistance is met (the swab should pass into the nasopharynx relatively easily), rotate the swab several times for approximately 10-15 seconds and gently withdraw the swab.
9. Place the entire swab into viral transport medium.



Please review this 2-minute procedure video on the collection of nasopharyngeal swab specimens.

[Nasopharyngeal Swab Procedure](#)

Sample Labeling

10. Label viral transport medium with SoftLab order label. If labels are not available, write the full name of the patient, DOB, MRN, and date/time of specimen collection. Clearly identify specimen source *e.g.*, NP swab.
11. Ensure screw cap lid is secure, place specimen into biohazard bag and seal.
12. Carefully remove PPE and wash hands thoroughly.