

Nasopharyngeal Swab Procedure

Adapted from BC CDC PHSA Lab Manual

Background

Nasopharyngeal swabs are used for the detection of respiratory viruses such as RSV, influenza virus A & B or parainfluenza virus. A properly collected viral swab (one nare is sufficient) is necessary for detection of these organisms.

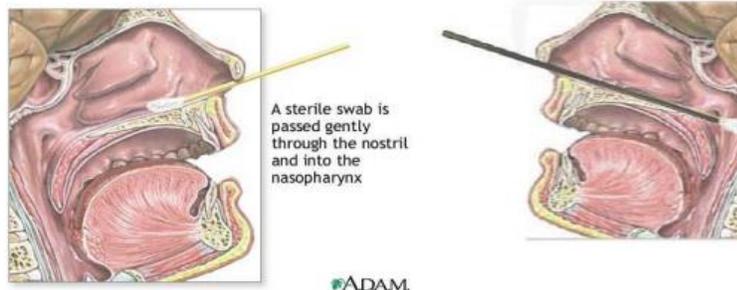
- a) Assemble supplies:
 - Universal Transport Medium (UTM) Kit (red top viral transfer container). Check expiry date. Personal protection equipment (i.e., mask, gloves, eye protection, gowns). Requisition and label, biohazard bag. Note: if no red top UTM Kits are available the blue top viral transfer may be used.



- b) Explain procedure to resident/patient.
- c) Wash hands. Put on appropriate personal protective equipment (at a minimum, gloves and facemask) to protect yourself in case the patient/resident coughs or sneezes while you are collecting the specimen.
- d) If the patient/resident has a lot of mucous in his/her nose, this can interfere with the collection of cells. Ask the patient/resident to use a tissue to gently clean out visible nasal mucous before a swab is taken. Influenza viruses are located in cells that line the surface of the inner nose. The virus is not found in the mucous discharge.
- e) Seat resident/patient in a comfortable bed. It is best if the patient is placed in a high-fowler's position in bed with the back of the head supported. It may be necessary to have a second person available to assist with collection.
- f) Swab Collection

Nasopharyngeal Swab

- Enter a flexible swab several centimeters with a slow, steady motion along the floor of the nose (straight back, not up the nose) until the posterior nasopharynx has been reached (distance from nostrils to external opening of ear)
- Place finger on the tip of the patient/resident's nose and depress slightly
- Once resistance is met (the swab should pass into the pharynx relatively easily), rotate the swab several times and withdraw the swab



- g) Break off top of swab (it will snap off)
- h) Place in transport medium.
- i) Remove personal protective equipment, wash hands.
- j) Ensure the specimen is labeled and transport to the laboratory with completed requisition.