**COVID-19**

**Interim Policy for Nasopharyngeal,**

**Oropharyngeal and Anterior Nasal (nares) Swab Collection**

**(05/27/2021)**

**Specimen Collection-COVID-19**

**Policy:**

It is the policy of this facility to collect an upper respiratory specimen for SARS-CoV-2 screening and diagnostic testing.

Collection of upper respiratory specimens are recommended by CDC for SARS-CoV-2 initial diagnostic testing and “should be collected as soon as a decision has been made to test someone, regardless of the time of symptom onset.”1

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates, “Proper specimen collection is the most important step in the laboratory diagnosis of infectious diseases. A specimen that is not collected correctly may lead to false or inconclusive test results.”1**

Upper respiratory specimens are recommended by CDC for initial diagnostic testing for current SARS-CoV-2 Infections. Follow testing laboratory or manufacturer’s instructions for specimen collection. Sterile swabs should be used. Upper respiratory specimens include:

* A nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen collected by trained healthcare personnel; or
* An oropharyngeal (OP) specimen collected by trained healthcare personnel; or
* A nasal mid-turbinate swab collected by trained healthcare personnel or by a supervised onsite self-collection when educated, and follows collection instructions: or
* An anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collected by trained healthcare personnel, or self-collected and observed by healthcare personnel after trained and follows collection instructions
* Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal wash/aspirate (NW) specimen collected by trained healthcare personnel; or
* A saliva specimen collected by the person being tested either with or without supervision

**Note:** Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal specimens are not appropriate for self-collection and will be performed by a trained healthcare provider

**Supplies:**

* Gloves
* Gown
* N95 Respirator (or facemask if N95 is not available)
* Eye Protection (face shield, eye protection that cover sides)
* Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts
  + Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts
* Sterile transport tube containing 2-3ml of either viral transport medium, Amies transport medium or sterile saline unless otherwise designated by lab

**Procedure**

1. Perform Hand Hygiene
2. Gather Supplies
3. Don PPE (gown, N95 if available or facemask, eye protection, gloves)
4. Close room door
5. Limit only essential employees in room.
6. Only grasp swab by the end of the handle with gloved hand
7. Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab:
   1. “Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees.
   2. Gently and slowly insert a mini tip swab with a flexible shaft (wire or plastic) through the nostril parallel to the palate (not upwards) until resistance is encountered or the distance is equivalent to that from the ear to the nostril of the patient, indicating contact with the nasopharynx.
   3. Gently rub and roll the swab.
   4. Leave swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions.
   5. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. Specimens can be collected from both sides using the same swab, but it is not necessary to collect specimens from both sides if the mini tip is saturated with fluid from the first collection.
   6. If a deviated septum or blockage create difficulty in obtaining the specimen from one nostril, use the same swab to obtain the specimen from the other nostril.
   7. Place swab, tip first, into the transport tube provided.”1
8. Oropharyngeal (OP) (throat) swab:
   1. “Insert swab into the posterior pharynx and tonsillar areas.
   2. Rub swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx and avoid touching the tongue, teeth, and gums.
   3. Place swab, tip first, into the transport tube provided.”1
9. If both NP and OP swabs are collected, they should be combined in a single tube.
10. Nasal mid-turbinate or Deep Nasal Swab
    1. “Use a tapered swab.
    2. Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees.
    3. While gently rotating the swab, insert swab less than one inch (about 2 cm) into nostril parallel to the palate (not upwards) until resistance is met at turbinates.
    4. Rotate the swab several times against nasal wall and repeat in other nostril using the same swab.
    5. Place swab, tip first, into the transport tube provided”1.
11. Anterior nares
    1. “Insert the entire collection tip of the swab provided (usually ½ to ¾ of an inch, or 1 to 1.5 cm) inside the nostril.
    2. Firmly sample the nasal wall by rotating the swab in a circular path against the nasal wall at least 4 times.
    3. Take approximately 15 seconds to collect the specimen. Be sure to collect any nasal drainage that may be present on the swab.
    4. Repeat in the other nostril using the same swab.
    5. Place swab, tip first, into the transport tube provided.”1
12. Place swabs immediately into sterile tubes that contain viral transport media, Amies transport medium, or sterile saline, unless using a test designed to analyze a specimen directly (i.e., point of care testing)
13. Saliva: Collect 1-5 mL of saliva into a sterile, leak-proof screw cap container. There is no need for preservative.
14. Remove PPE in proper sequence.
15. Perform Hand Hygiene
16. Label Specimen
17. Disinfect room and surfaces with EPA list N disinfectant.

**CDC Visual Guides for posting:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/lab/NP_Specimen_Collection_Infographic_FINAL_508.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/lab/NMT_Specimen_Collection_Infographic_FINAL_508.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/How-To-Collect-Anterior-Nasal-Specimen-for-COVID-19.pdf>

**References and Resources:**

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Interim Guidelines for Collecting and Handling of Clinical Specimens for COVID-19 Testing. Updated Feb. 26, 2021: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Testing Guidelines for Nursing Homes. Updated Jan. 7, 2021: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/nursing-homes-testing.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Interim Infection and Control Recommendations to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Spread in Nursing Homes. Updated Mar. 29, 2021: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), HHS.gov. SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Fact Sheet. Guidance – Proposed use of Point-of-Care (POC) Testing Platforms for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/OASH-COVID-19-guidance-testing-platforms.pdf>