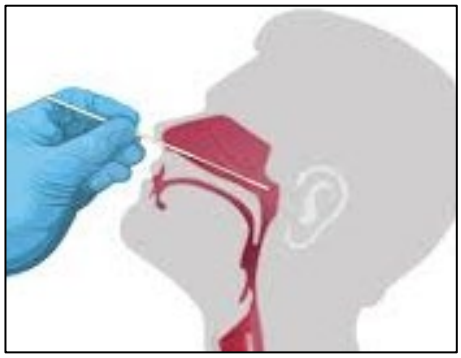
Guidance for Collection of Nasopharyngeal Swab

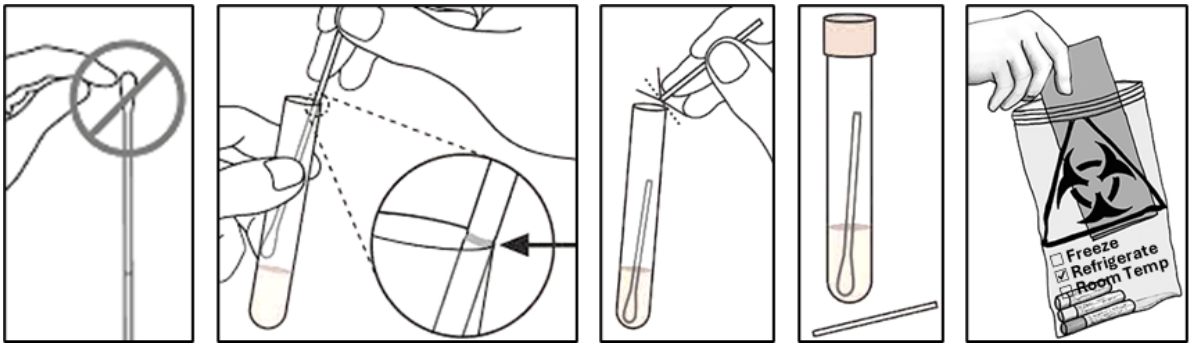
Respiratory pathogen diagnosis depends on the collection of high-quality specimens, appropriate storage post-collection, and prompt transport to the testing laboratory. Training in specimen collection and storage is highly recommended due to the importance of specimen quality and integrity in laboratory testing. Healthcare providers collecting specimens should maintain proper infection control and use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Note that self-collection of NP swab specimens is not appropriate. When NP swab specimens cannot be collected (e.g., infants or patients refusing collection), a combined nasal and throat swab specimen or aspirate specimen can serve as a good alternative. Specimens should be collected within 4 days of onset of clinical symptoms to ensure optimal detection.

1. Label a sterile tube containing 2-3 mL of suitable collection medium with:
    - Patient's name and DOB
    - Type of specimen (NPS)
    - Date of collection

    Note: *Acceptable collection media will vary depending on the test ordered (see individual test descriptions for list of suitable media)*.



3. Use sterile, synthetic fiber (Dacron, Rayon or Nylon) swabs with thin, flexible plastic or wire shafts designed for sampling the nasopharyngeal mucosa; do not use cotton or calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts. Do not touch the tip of the swab at any time.
4. If the nasal passages have a large amount of mucus, ask the patient to blow their nose before specimen collection.
5. Tilt the patient's head back about 70 degrees.
6. With the thumb of one hand, elevate the tip of the patient's nose and insert the tip of the NP swab into a nostril.
7. Gently and slowly, guide the swab straight back (parallel to the palate, not upwards) until resistance is encountered (posterior wall of the nasopharynx) or to a distance equivalent to that from nose to ear of the patient. Do not force the swab – if an obstruction is encountered during insertion, try the other nostril.
8. Gently rotate and rub the swab against the nasopharynx several times.
9. Leave swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions.
10. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. Specimens can be collected from both nostrils using the same swab, but it is not necessary to collect specimens from both sides if the NP swab is saturated with fluid from the first collection.
11. Immediately, place swab tip-first into the labeled tube containing collection medium.
12. Break-off or cut excess shaft of swab so that tube can be capped.
13. Replace the cap of the tube; tighten and wrap with Parafilm to prevent leakage of contents during transport.
14. Place the tube in a clear plastic specimen bag containing an appropriate amount of absorbent material and seal.
15. Complete a test requisition form and insert it in the outer pouch of the bag. Keep a copy of the test requisition form if filled out manually.
16. Refrigerate (2-8°C) the specimen immediately.
17. Ship/transport to OSDH PHL as soon as possible and as per test instructions.


Freeze
Refrigerate
Room Temp