



MANUAL/DEPARTMENT	CLINICAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL
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TITLE: **Nasopharyngeal Swab** Page 1 of 2

PURPOSE

To describe the procedure for collecting ciliated columnar respiratory epithelial cells from the posterior nasopharynx for respiratory viral and selected bacterial testing using a nasopharyngeal flocked swab.

SCOPE

Children’s Hospital Colorado (CHCO) - All Locations – Outpatient Settings Only

PERSONNEL

All Clinical Staff

GENERAL INFORMATION

Nasopharyngeal aspirates or nasal wash specimens are generally considered the specimens of choice to test for respiratory viruses and *Bordetella pertussis* or *parapertussis*. Obtaining an aspirate is unpleasant and requires a suction device. The collection of a nasopharyngeal swab is faster and can be done without any additional devices. For immunocompromised patients the overall sensitivity of nasopharyngeal aspirates or washes is superior to flocked swabs for detection of these pathogens. Nasopharyngeal washes or aspirates should continue to be collected for respiratory virus and *B. pertussis* or *parapertussis* testing of immunocompromised patients for this reason. Method is not to be used to test for MRSA.

EQUIPMENT

1. Personal protective equipment.
2. Facial tissue
3. Sealable biohazard bags.
4. Collection Pack; containing flocked nasopharyngeal swab and Universal Transport Medium for Viruses, Chlamydia, and Ureaplasma (UTM).

PROCEDURES

- I. Assemble equipment
- II. Open collection pack.
- III. Don PPE.
- IV. Remove excess mucus from patient’s nose with facial tissue.
- V. Position patient as shown in image below
- VI. Gently insert the swab into the nostril until it reaches the posterior nares. The distance between the tip of the nose and the tragus of the ear provides a good estimate of how deep the swab should be inserted.



- VII. Rotate the swab gently against the nasopharyngeal mucosa for 10 – 15 seconds then gently remove swab.
- VIII. After the swab is removed from the patient place it into the transport tube all the way to the bottom of the tube.
- IX. Holding the swab shaft close to the rim of the tube, break the applicator shaft at the colored breakpoint indication line. Hold the tube opening away from your face.
- X. Label specimen container at bedside and place in biohazard bag.
- XI. Deliver specimen promptly to laboratory. If the interval between specimen collection and delivery to the laboratory is longer than an hour, place specimen in refrigerator until courier arrives and sends on a cold ice pack.

RELATED DOCUMENTS/REFERENCES

[Specimen/Requisition Labeling Policy PC 1003.2](#)
[Nasopharyngeal Wash](#)

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