

**COLLECTION OF NASAL AND THROAT SWABS
FOR RESPIRATORY VIRUS TESTING**

2 July 2009

**Specimen collection should occur in appropriate settings in hospitals,
doctors' surgeries and approved pathology collection centres**

Collect two specimens (one nasal and one throat) as follows:

1. OBTAIN MATERIALS

- Viral culture swabs (swab tubes with viral transport medium (VTM))
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the health care worker (HCW): gown, gloves, protective eyewear, surgical mask; and hand hygiene products

2. PREPARE ROOM

- Need a wall that the patient can rest their head against when patient stands or sits
- HCW needs enough space to be able to stand **beside** the patient (**not** in front)
- Hand hygiene: need to have facilities and products eg alcohol-based hand cleanser

3. PREPARE HEALTHCARE WORKER

- Perform hand hygiene, don PPE according to current NSW Health infection control guidelines for influenza (gown, surgical mask, protective eyewear and gloves)

4. PREPARE PATIENT

- Explain the procedure to the patient
- Place patient with head against a wall (standing or sitting)

5. SPECIMEN COLLECTION (the swabs will be combined for testing)**Nasal swab (collected from the nasal septum, not just the anterior nares)**

1. Stand at the side of the patient
2. Ensure the patient's head is resting against the wall
3. Place your hand on the patient's forehead (non-dominant hand) and the thumb at the tip of the nose
4. Use a viral culture swab and insert the swab into the closest nostril horizontally, approximately 2–3 cm
5. Place lateral pressure on the swab in order to collect cells from the midline nasal septum
6. Rotate the swab twice ($2 \times 360^\circ$ turns) collecting the epithelial cells (not mucous)
7. Place swab directly in the tube, label tube with patient name, collection date and source (nose)

Throat swab

1. Stand at the side of the patient
1. Ensure the patient's head is resting against the wall
2. Place your hand on the patient's forehead (non-dominant hand)
3. Ask the patient to open their mouth widely and say 'argh'
4. Use a viral culture swab and insert the swab into mouth avoiding any saliva
5. Place lateral pressure on the swab in order to collect cells from the tonsillar fossa at the side of the pharynx
6. Rotate the swab twice ($2 \times 360^\circ$ turns) collecting the epithelial cells (not mucous)
7. Place swab directly in the tube, label tube with patient name, collection date and source (throat)

6. REMOVE PPE

- Remove PPE according to current NSW Health infection control guidelines for influenza (gloves, perform hand hygiene, protective eyewear, gown, perform hand hygiene, remove surgical mask)
- Perform hand hygiene

7. SPECIMEN HANDLING AND TRANSPORT

- Use Standard Precautions for specimen handling and transport to the laboratory.