



Throat collection instructions for respiratory viruses using saline transport medium

1. Various collection containers and colored media may be provided to your site. Throat swabs will have a shaft with a continuous thickness. Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs have a narrower flexible end and the swab head is smaller than the throat swab. **The saline collection kits include a polyester or cotton-tipped swab with sterile saline media. These swabs may not have a breakpoint.**
2. Store collection kit at room temperature.
3. Fill out the requisition provided for COVID-19 and respiratory virus testing or enter into your EMR and label the tube with:
 - Name and date of birth
 - Unique identifiers (MRN or Alberta Health Care Number)
 - Time of collection
 - Site of collection (throat)
 - Include ordering provider (designated medical officer of health or other physician) on the requisition
 - If using a printed label make sure the label is properly affixed to the tube
4. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as per protocol for collection of COVID-19 NP samples.
5. Explain procedure to the patient.
6. Collect throat swab. **VIGOROUSLY** swab the areas highlighted in the figure. Swabbing may activate the gag reflex.
7. While holding the swab in your hand, unscrew the tube cap. Do not spill the tube contents. **If using a swab without a breakpoint, carefully insert the swab into the tube and hold the swab just above the transport medium.**
 - **Break the shaft by bending it over the edge of the tube opening multiple times.**
 - **Alternatively, cut the shaft with scissors decontaminating the blades with alcohol wipes between collections.**
8. Discard the top portion of the shaft. **Tightly screw the cap onto the tube. Leaking specimens will be rejected by the laboratory.**
9. Place tube in biohazard bag. Place requisition in pouch outside of the bag.
10. Refrigerate tubes or store on ice if possible. If no refrigeration available, store at room temperature and ship to the lab within 48 hours.
11. An instructional video is **[available here.](#)**

