COVID 19 Testing – Update to Anterior Nares Specimen Collection

What: Insertion depth increased to 3 cm and rotation of the swab is increased to 6 times in both directions.
Why: Change in technique will allow for improved sampling of cellular material and reliable testing.
When: 8/11/2020
Who: Nurses & Trained Medical Assistants/CNAs Performing COVID 19 Specimen Collection
Where: All COVID 19 Outpatient Testing Sites

COVID 19 Anterior Nares Specimen Collection Procedure

1. Perform Hand Hygiene & don PPE, according to current guidance from Infection Control.
2. Confirm Order in Epic - COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)
4. Open specimen collection kit - a single swab should be used to sample both nares.
5. Grasp the swab (above the demarcated line) like a pencil to accommodate any resistance encountered during insertion.
6. Insert the swab at least 3 cm (slightly more than 1 inch) inside the nostril (naris) ⚠
7. Firmly sample the nasal membrane by rotating the swab in a circular motion at least 6 times in both directions; (about 10 to 15 seconds to absorb cellular material) ⚠
8. Repeat the process for the other nostril using the same swab.
9. Place the swab immediately into the sterile viral transport media/sterile saline vial. The shaft of swab can be snapped off at the demarcated line, and the tube should be closed tightly.
10. Label specimen & verify identity using 2 patient identifiers.
11. Doff PPE & perform hand hygiene.

It is possible that the patient may have an anatomical difference (eg. Deviated septum) that may prevent the swab from being successfully inserted 3 cm into the nostril. Given this possibility, it is critical to swab both nostrils to collect a viable specimen.

1. Scan the QR Code by opening the camera or reader app on your phone.
2. Face the camera towards the code.
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Questions: Shannon Wells Nursing Professional Development