

**HUP: Protocol for obtaining specimens for COVID-19 Testing**

**Updated:** 5/5/2020

Most testing for COVID-19 infection (SARS CoV-2 virus) will occur via nasopharyngeal swab collection. While supplies last, some viral testing kits will come with two swabs, in which case the second swab should be used to collect an oropharyngeal sample. IF your test kit only has one swab, a nasopharyngeal swab alone is adequate and you should not open a second test kit to obtain an OP swab.

**The quality of the nasopharyngeal specimen is crucial and affects the sensitivity of the test.** Please follow the guidelines below for obtaining quality specimens.

**Materials:** Currently we are performing NP or NP/OP swabs using our standard viral collection kit (red top) with universal viral transport media. This may change as supplies of these kits are limited. Of note, you can ADD ON a COVID-19 in house or send out test to our current viral collection kit – so please avoid doing multiple tests to conserve materials if the patient has a respiratory viral panel already pending.

**Procedure:**

1. Providers should be wearing gown, mask, goggles/face shield, gloves when collecting specimen, and perform hand hygiene before and after encounter (for all patients under investigation for COVID-19).
2. For the nasopharyngeal (NP) swab: tilt patient's head back and insert smaller swab (below) parallel to palate until resistance is met by contact with the nasopharynx. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Leave swab in place for 2-3 seconds then rotate completely around for 10-15 seconds. Patients generally feel very uncomfortable with this procedure. Be prepared for them to pull their head and/or body away.
3. Remove swab and repeat the same process in the other nostril with the same swab.



4. For the oropharyngeal (OP) swab: using the larger swab (below), swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.



5. Place either the NP swab alone (if only one swab in kit) or both the NP and OP swabs (if two swabs in kit) immediately into the sterile viral transport media vial and the shaft of swabs can be snapped off at the demarcated line, and the tube should be closed tightly. **For INTUBATED patients: they only need a nasopharyngeal swab performed in both nostrils**

6. Ensure patient label is placed on tube

7. Place the sample in a clear plastic specimen bag, seal and then place this bag in another plastic specimen bag (ie double bag the specimen).

7. Tube the specimen to central receiving on Founders 7 (may be sent via tube system)

**Endotracheal samples for SARS CoV-2 testing:**

For patients who are mechanically ventilated or have a tracheostomy and an endotracheal aspirate sample is desired for testing, please order in PennChart via the "COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2)" orderable, and indicate in comments "tracheal aspirate". Send a sputum sample in sterile cup (please double bag) to microbiology or central receiving.