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|  | Department:<br><br><b>Respiratory Services</b>  | Date Originated: <b>June 2004</b><br><br>Date Reviewed/Revised: <b>January 2011</b> |
| <b>PROCEDURE</b>  | Topic: <u>Medical/Surgical</u> –<br>Nasopharyngeal Wash<br>Specimen Collection<br>/Nasopharyngeal Swab<br>Information (Respiratory<br>Therapy)<br><br>Number: B-00-12-12050 | Related Links:  |

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#### **APPLICABLE SITES:**

St. Paul's Hospital  
 Mount Saint Joseph Hospital

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

PCR testing using a flocked Copan swab of the nasopharynx is sufficient to determine whether or not the presenting illness is caused by the influenza virus or not. Nasopharyngeal swab specimens can be obtained by nursing unit staff and do not require the assistance of the Respiratory Therapist. Information regarding obtaining a nasopharyngeal swab specimen can be found in the [PHC Virology Ward Manual](#).

Nasopharyngeal washes are not required unless knowledge of the specific etiologic agent will change patient management. Nasopharyngeal washes will be performed by the Respiratory Therapist.

#### **PROCEDURE FOR NASOPHARYNGEAL WASH:**

\*NOTE: As a result of limited resources, Respiratory Therapists will not be able to obtain nasopharyngeal wash specimens outside of SPH and MSJH.

#### **EQUIPMENT:**

- 3 mL prefilled saline syringe
- Sterile specimen trap with lid
- Lubricating jelly
- 12 Fr sterile suction catheter kit
- Standard Virology laboratory requisition (available in Chartscan)
- Personal protective equipment as appropriate (must be fitted N95 mask)
- Suction regulator and set-up
- Ice pack (if sample delivery over 1 hour)

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Verify order specifically for nasopharyngeal wash; **if knowledge of the specific etiologic agent will not change the patient management, refer patient for nasopharyngeal swab specimen.**
2. Gather equipment and supplies.
3. Wash hands and don personal protective equipment including fit-tested N95 mask.
4. Introduce yourself to the patient and explain procedure.
5. Lay the patient in a supine position as tolerated with the head supported with a pillow or folded blanket.
6. Remove specimen trap from packaging and ensure the lid is tight. Contact the specimen trap to the suction source and adjust the regulator to a low setting ~ 80 mmHg.
7. Open the suction catheter kit ensuring sterility is maintained.
8. Approximate the required distance of catheter advancement by measuring the distance on the catheter from the patient's nose to their earlobe. Attach the catheter to the specimen trap.
9. Instruct the patient to hold their breath and then smoothly instill 2-3 mL of saline into one nare of the patient.
10. Gently insert the catheter into the nasal cavity until the nasopharynx is reached.
11. Occlude the thumb-control port of the catheter to begin suctioning while gently rotating and withdrawing the catheter. The aspirate will usually appear cloudy with some sputum present.
12. Rinse the catheter with a small amount of sterile saline to ensure the sample is cleared from the catheter and contained within the specimen trap.
13. Disconnect the suction source from the specimen trap and remove the suction catheter. Seal the specimen trap with the sterile lid.
14. Label the specimen with a patient label and seal in a biohazard bag.
15. Remove equipment and supplies from the bedside.
16. Remove personal protective equipment and wash hands.
17. Label and complete the virology requisition. Indicate the sample type as **NPW** or **Naspharyngeal Wash**, and the type of test required as **VIRAP**.
18. Document procedure and patient response in the Progress Notes of the patient record.

19. Send the specimen to the Microbiology Laboratory:

- At SPH, nasopharyngeal wash specimen will be hand-delivered to the Microbiology Laboratory and placed in the refrigerator for Virology; verbal notification of the delivery must be given to the laboratory staff
- At MSJH, the nursing unit staff will be responsible for sending the nasopharyngeal wash specimen via taxi to the SPH Microbiology Laboratory; telephone notification of the pending delivery must be provided to the laboratory staff

**NOTE:** If the sample cannot be delivered to the SPH Microbiology Laboratory within 1 hour of collection, it must be placed on ice.

**REFERENCES:**

1. PHC Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. Virology Ward Manual, July 2010. Available on PHC Intranet: [http://phcconnect/policies\\_manuals/laboratory/virology/page\\_5379.htm](http://phcconnect/policies_manuals/laboratory/virology/page_5379.htm)
2. Sherlock, CH. Letter: *Laboratory testing for influenza viruses at PHC – update*. September 18, 2009.