

Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) – Specimen Collection: Nasopharyngeal Swabs (NPS)

Specimens are processed in the PHC Virology and Reference Laboratory at St. Paul's Hospital. Specimens should be received by noon. Contact the Medical Microbiologist for special requests.

Please do **NOT** order or collect specimens for testing if the results will not affect treatment decision making.

SPECIMEN TYPE:

Nasopharyngeal Swabs (NP Swabs)

Nasopharyngeal swabs are used to diagnose influenza only and use PCR testing only (not DFA). The swab must be the Copan flocked swab, supplied by the lab; other swabs MUST NOT be used as they may compromise the test result. The swab kits will be labeled 'For influenza virus' and can be obtained from the SPH and MSJ laboratory in the same location and manner as all other viral collection kits. Health care staff, which includes physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists, may collect an NP swab specimen.

Collection of Specimens General:

- The decision to collect respiratory specimens is based on patients/residents demonstrating signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and the diagnosis/confirmation of influenza is necessary to start prompt treatment.
- DO NOT ask for influenza testing if the result of testing will not change patient/resident management decisions, particularly if the patient will be discharged home.
- The specimen must be received in the virology lab by 12:00 (noon) for same day testing. Note: testing will not be available on weekends.
- If samples need to be stored, place them in the fridge at 4°C as for other virology samples.
- The result will be available in Cerner as soon as it is reported in the lab. Please try not to phone the lab for the result as this simply impedes progress of testing.
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (see below) to protect from splashes or sprays during collection.

Identification of Specimens General:

- Label the specimen with the patient/resident's full name, date of birth, PHN number.
- Include the name and address of the facility sending the specimen.

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC), Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). PHC, PHSA and VCH accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC, PHSA and VCH. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.

Note: The laboratory is unable to process unlabeled specimens or specimens without an accompanying requisition.

PPE for NP Swabs

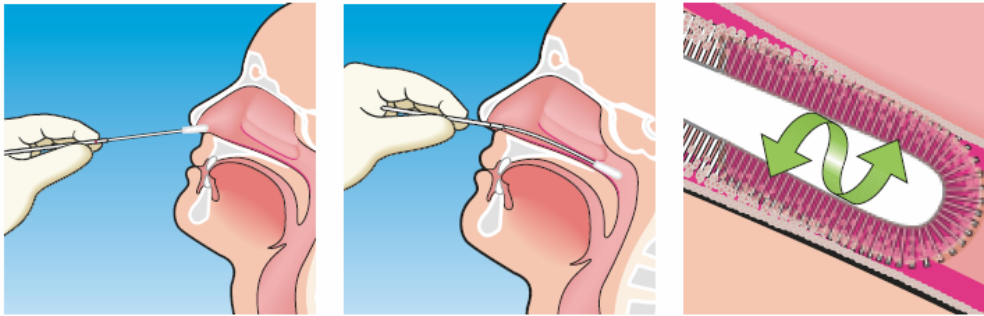
- Gloves
- Gown
- Surgical grade mask
- Eye protection

Method of Collection NP Swab Specimen:

1. Use the Copan UTM (Universal Transport Media) kit for influenza virus. The swab kits will be labeled 'For influenza virus' and can be obtained from the SPH and MSJ laboratory in the same location and manner as all other viral collection kits.
2. Health care staff, which includes physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists, may collect an NP swab specimen
3. Explain procedure to patient.
4. Clean your hands with soap and water or Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR)
5. Put on personal protection equipment before collecting the specimens.
6. Excessive mucus can interfere with the collection of cells. Ask the patient to use a tissue to gently clean out visible nasal mucous before a swab is taken.
7. Seat patient in a comfortable position in a bed or chair. It is best if the patient is placed in a high-fowler's position in bed with the back of the head supported.
8. It may be necessary to have a second person available to assist with collection.
9. Insert the flexible swab several centimeters with a slow, steady motion along the floor of the nose (straight back, not up the nose) until the nasopharynx has been reached.
10. Once resistance is met (the swab should pass into the nasopharynx relatively easily), rotate the swab for 10 to 15 seconds and withdraw the swab.
11. Place swab in viral transport medium.
12. Break off top of swab. Screw cap on snugly.
13. Remove your PPE according to the Donning and Doffing IPAC Document
14. Perform HH after removing each item
15. Label the specimen and send to the PHC lab with the UBC Virology and Reference Laboratory requisition.
16. Place the swab into the transport medium supplied in the kit, as demonstrated on the kit package.

17. The specimen must be received in the virology lab by 12:00 (noon) for same day testing. Note: testing will not be available on weekends.
18. If samples need to be stored, place them in the fridge at 4°C as for other virology samples.

The result will be reported as 'Influenza A (or B) virus RNA detected' if positive.



1. Gently insert the swab along the nasal septum just above the floor of the passage to the nasopharynx until resistance is met
2. Rotate the swab gently against the nasopharyngeal mucosa for 10 - 15 seconds then gently remove swab

