COVID 19- Obtaining a Nasopharyngeal Swab Sample

Collecting nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs is an important tool in the diagnosis of a variety of upper and lower respiratory tract infections including influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus). The quality of the specimen collection is critical, and the correct collection of the specimen is directly linked to the sensitivity of the test.

Materials:
For respiratory viruses- universal transport media (UTM) with flexible or standard Minitip FLOCKED swab.
- A single swab can be used to test for influenza, RSV, respiratory panel, and COVID-19
- Check expiration date prior to use
- Do NOT use bacterial flocked swabs

Procedure:
1. This procedure may also generate a cough so prepare to move to the side of the patient if possible, especially after completing the process.
2. Cover the patient’s mouth when obtaining specimen with mask (if available) or tissue.
3. The procedure may cause some bleeding from the nares. Give the patient a tissue before starting.
4. Adhere to all infection prevention and control steps, including hand hygiene before and after the procedure.
   a. Follow isolation status of patient. Minimum PPE: mask, eye protection and gloves
   b. COVID-19 testing PPE = N95 (preferred)/facemask, eye protection, gloves and gown
5. If the patient has nasal congestion or a moderate amount of rhinorrhea (congestion), ask them to blow their nose into a tissue.
6. Tilt the patient head back slightly and ask them to close their eyes, if possible.
7. Insert the minitip flocked swab into the nostril PARALLEL To the palate until resistance is met by contact with the nasopharynx. (See picture below). DO NOT USE FORCE. If resistance is encountered, withdraw the swab a little without removing from nostril, then elevate the back of the swab and move it forward into the nasopharynx.
8. Pause for 2-3 seconds then rotate completely around in a circular motion for 5-10 seconds. Note: Although not painful, patients generally feel uncomfortable with this procedure. Be prepared for them to pull their head and/or body away.
9. Remove swab and repeat the same process in the other nostril with the same swab.
10. After the second swabbing is completed, immediately place into the sterile vial containing the UTM. The shaft of the swab is snapped off at the indicated line. This line usually aligns with the length of the swab that can fit into the tube
11. Ensure cap is closed tightly.
12. Place the patient label on the tube and place into a biohazard bag with the included absorbent towel.
13. Transport specimen to lab for processing.