

Taking a nasopharyngeal swab technique

Equipment needed

1. Nasopharyngeal viral swab (adult or paediatric size)
2. Non-sterile gown
3. Face Visor
4. Non-sterile gloves
5. FFP2(N95) or FFP3(N99) mask
6. Form
7. Biohazard plastic bag
8. Clinical waste bin

Procedure

1. Put on personal protective equipment according to infection control instructions before entering patient's room. Label the tube with the viral transport medium.
2. Explain the procedure to the patient or parent/guardian and the reason for swabbing.
3. Masks are recommended for all patients suspected of having Covid-19. Ask the patient to blow their nose into a tissue before the procedure so as to clear the nasal passages from excessive secretions.
4. Have the patient sit up, tilt their head slightly backwards so that nasal passages become more accessible and close their eyes so as to lessen the mild discomfort of the procedure.
5. Perform hand hygiene using alcohol hand rub.
6. Make sure you are using the flexible and thinner nasopharyngeal swab rather than the rigid and larger version intended for oropharyngeal swabbing. Gently insert the nasopharyngeal swab straight along the nasal septum just above the floor of the nasal passage to the nasal pharynx until resistance is felt. The swab should reach a depth equal to the distance from the nostrils to the outer opening of the ear. If you detect resistance to the passage of the swab, back off and try reinserting it at a different angle, closer to the floor of the nasal canal.
7. The CDC recommends leaving the swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions and then slowly removing the swab while rotating it. Your institution may also recommend rotating the swab in place several times before removing it. Ask the patient to reapply her mask.
8. Gently remove the swab, insert it in accompanying tube, shaking the tip of the swab in the liquid.
9. Break off the end of the swab at the indented part and close the tube cap and place in the designated biohazard plastic bag.
10. Remove all personal protective equipment, discard in a clinical waste bin
11. Perform hand hygiene after removing PPE.
12. Send specimen to the laboratory immediately.



[Watch video](#)

Reference: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmvcm2010260>