

How to collect...

Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swabs and Stool Specimens

Note: Specimens should be collected as soon after the person gets sick as possible and shipped the same day as collected whenever possible. Specimens to determine the cause of an outbreak should be collected in accordance with advice from your local health department.

NP Swab Collection (for Respiratory Illness)

1. **Specimen collection kits:** to appropriately collect a NP swab, you will need the following supplies:
 - A. Sterile Viral Transport Media (VTM broth) - Store at 2°– 30°C (36–86°F). Do not use if fluid is cloudy. Check packaging to make sure the product has not expired.
 - B. One polyester (Dacron) swab, aluminum shaft (avoid wooden shafts)
 - C. One small sealable specimen bag with absorbent pad
 - D. One set of instructions
 - E. Metal container
 - F. Large, sealable, biohazard plastic shipping bag with pouch
 - G. Two cold packs (store frozen so it will be ready for transport)
 - H. One cooler
2. **Collection procedures for NP swab:**
 - A. Instruct the patient/resident to sit with head slightly tilted backwards. Gently push the tip of the patient's nose back with your thumb.
 - B. Insert the swab gently into the nostril and all the way back to the nasopharynx. The patient's eyes will momentarily tear. Slowly rotate the swab as it is being withdrawn.
 - C. Repeat this process using the same swab in the second nostril.
 - D. Insert the swab into the transport broth, bending the wire if necessary to fit completely inside the vial. The broth should cover the tip of the swab in the vial. Tightly cap the vial.
 - E. Label the collection tube with the patient/resident's first name, last name, and date of collection. Complete the appropriate laboratory form thoroughly. Refrigerate the specimen until packaging it for transport to the lab.

Stool Specimen Collection (for Gastrointestinal Illness)

1. **Collecting raw or preserved stool specimens:** Both raw and preserved specimens should be collected for outbreak testing. Specimens **cannot** be contaminated by water or urine. **DO NOT** scoop the stool out of the toilet bowl.
 - A. Place several sheets of newspaper (or plastic wrap) under the toilet seat so that stool cannot fall into the toilet bowl.
 - B. *Raw specimens:* Collect a raw stool specimen in a clean, dry container. If a spatula is used to collect stool (e.g., from a bedpan or diaper/incontinence pad), a plastic spatula should be used rather than a wooden one. If possible, enough stool should be collected to halfway fill the container. Follow the steps below to place a portion in Cary-Blair media. Close the lid tightly. Once the stool is collected in the container, it should be kept refrigerated and shipped on ice.
 - C. *Preserved Cary-Blair specimens* (container with red liquid inside): Check packaging to make sure the product has not expired. Use the scoop inside the container (or other utensil provided) to add enough stool to bring the liquid level to the red line. Close the container tightly and shake well. After the sample is placed in this type of container, it should be kept at room temperature. **DO NOT** ship Cary-Blair specimens on ice.
 - D. Staff should wear appropriate personal protective equipment when collecting specimens, and wash hands following collection.
 - E. Label each specimen container with the first and last name of the patient/resident and date of collection. Complete a laboratory form and follow instructions for shipping.
2. **Collecting stool specimens using a rectal swab**
 - A. Insert the swab 4 to 6 cm into the rectum. Gently rub the swab against the inner walls of the rectum to collect cells and fecal material. Place the swab into the collection tube, cap it, and seal tightly.
 - B. Label the cup or tube with the patient/resident's name and date of collection. Complete the laboratory form and refrigerate the specimen until packaging it for transport to the lab.