COVID-19 INTERIM GUIDANCE
NASOPHARYNGEAL VIRAL SWAB COLLECTION – PEDIATRIC (less than 17 years):
USING UNIVERSAL TRANSPORT MEDIUM (UTM) SWAB KIT
MAY 2020

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this document is to provide interim guidance on the safe collection of nasopharyngeal (NP) viral swabs on children to test for COVID-19. Prior to initiating testing please ensure you have reviewed the guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, the COVID-19 Pediatric Testing Guidelines from IH, as well as the most current testing information from the BCCDC.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
With any procedure being conducted on a child incorporate the principles of family centered and trauma informed care.

For a child and their caregiver, the collection of a NP swab can be a stressful and scary experience. Staff can help to minimise that stress by taking steps to put them at ease. Whenever possible and age/developmentally appropriate, the provider should try to direct their communication primarily to the child, and allow time for them to respond and ask questions. Basic considerations should include:

• Provide time for the child to settle in.
• Get down to the child’s eye level and speak to them using a calm and soothing tone.
• Introduce yourself, and your role. Explain any PPE that you are wearing.
• Ensure you have discussed both the advantages and disadvantages of conducting this test with the caregiver and the child, and answered any questions they might have.
• Provide clear information using easy to understand language to the caregiver and child about how the test will be performed and what to expect (refer to videos linked in the resources for families section of this document for more information).
• Provide privacy and try to reduce distractions in the testing area.
• Where possible avoid separating the child from the parent or caregiver.
• If age/developmentally appropriate provide the child with choices and opportunities for control.

POSITIONING:
Positioning for the procedure is very important.

• Young children and infants should be placed in a supine position with the head of bead slightly elevated.
• Bundling or swaddling in a blanket is appropriate for infants.
• Older children who are able to follow direction, can sit on caregiver’s lap if more comfortable.
• Expect that the child may try to pull their head away during the procedure. One provider should gently stabilize the child’s head, while a second provider collects the specimen.
• Incorporate age/developmentally appropriate distraction methods to help the child to remain calm during the procedure. Suggestions include: asking the child to wiggle their toes; have them count to 10 with you (ensuring the test is complete when you get to 10); have the child hold a special toy or blanket; or sing a favorite song.
• The caregiver’s role should be one of comfort, and not restraining for the child. Suggest they sit or stand beside the child to hold their hand or provide physical contact to offer support.
• As soon as the procedure is complete provide positive feedback to the child, and encourage the caregiver to pick up or hold the child to provide comfort and reassurance.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES:

The following videos are good resources that provide examples of child friendly information and language from Sick Kids Hospital about having a NP swab and the PPE staff might be wearing.

• NP Swab
• PPE

PROCEDURE:

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Don personal protective equipment as appropriate (gloves, gown, face and eye protection)
3. Have the patient blow their nose if possible, to remove excess mucous. A bulb suction could be used with infants. The test requires respiratory cells, not mucous.
4. Have the patient lie back about 70° or bundle them.
5. Measure and mark on the swab, the distance from the patient nose to the earlobe; swab should be inserted approximately 1/2 of this length.
6. Without contaminating the shaft gently insert the swab straight back (NOT UP) in the nostril to the desired length or until gentle resistance is felt (see figure).
7. Rotate the swab twice and try to allow it to remain in place for several seconds (if possible).
8. Withdraw the swab and insert it into the universal transport medium. Hold the tube away from your face. Holding the end of the swab shaft, bend it at 180 degrees angle to break at the breakpoint. Screw on the lid without cross-threading.
9. Ensure the label on the swab has 3 patient identifiers: Full Name, DOB, and PHN. For COVID-19 specimens: record on the label: NP Swab, collection date, time and mnemonic, and add the appropriate collection code and as per BCCDC COVID-19 Specimen labelling instructions.
10. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.
11. Place the specimen container in a biohazard transport bag, with the completed paper requisition and send to laboratory immediately for optimal turnaround time and cell integrity. The specimen should be kept refrigerated from...
the time of collection and throughout transport.

**For COVID-19 specimens:** complete the paper requisition including: Patient Information, Ordering Physician, and Test Name (COVID-19 NAT) as per BCCDC COVID-19 Specimen labelling instructions

**Note: Neonatal swabs are available; please contact the laboratory when required**

REFERENCES


QUESTIONS:

For questions related to this interim guidance, or caring for the pediatric population in IH please contact Dr. Tom Warshawski, Robert Finch or Erin McFee.