WHO SHOULD BE TESTED: Hospitalized patients with severe unexplained febrile respiratory illness that have been approved for testing by the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (304-558-5358).

WHAT IS COLLECTED: The preferred specimen is a nasopharyngeal swab (NP). However, OLS will also accept nasal swabs, nasal aspirates, and throat swabs. OLS will NOT accept nasal washes.

HOW IS IT COLLECTED: Once collected, the swab(s) should be placed in viral transport media (VTM) as soon as possible. Make sure the lid is securely closed. It is recommended to use Parafilm or tape to seal the lid. VTM (sometimes called UTM) is a red/pink liquid containing small clear beads. The use of Stuart’s, Amies, or other inappropriate transport media will result in rejection of the sample.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE): Use proper PPE when collecting NP swabs from an infected patient. Proper PPE includes surgical mask, disposable gloves, and droplet protection such as face mask or safety glasses. When collection is complete, dispose of all PPE and other contaminated materials in a trash receptacle. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel before and after the collection procedure.

STEPS TO NP SWAB COLLECTION:
1. Remove the patient’s surgical mask (if necessary) to perform the procedure and replace when done.
2. Use a flexible aluminum or plastic fine-shafted swab with a polyester, Dacron, or rayon tip. Do not use cotton or calcium alginate.
3. Insert the swab into the nostril and back into the nasopharynx and leave in place for a few seconds.
4. Slowly withdraw the swab with a rotating motion.
5. Place the tip of the swab into the vial containing 2-3mL of VTM or UTM. If using an aluminum shaft swab, cut the shaft. If using a plastic shaft swab, break the shaft at the break point.
6. Label the transport tube with the patient’s first and last name and the date of collection.
(7) Complete the test request/submission form.

FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE FORM IN ITS ENTIRETY MAY RESULT IN THE REJECTION OF THE SAMPLE.

STORAGE: After collection, place the vial containing the swab and media into a zippered or sealable biohazard labeled bag. Keep the specimen(s) refrigerated at 4°C until shipping. If the specimen(s) cannot be shipped within 72 hours after collection, they should be kept frozen at -70°C or below.

PACKAGING: Specimens should be packaged in an insulated box and shipped overnight with ice packs. Dry ice is not necessary. The package must be shipped according to the current DOT, IATA, and ICAO regulations. See our website - www.wvdhhr.org/labservices - for complete packaging and shipping guidelines. An example of proper marking and labeling is shown below.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Any questions regarding specimen collection, packaging and shipping, or laboratory testing may be addressed to the following persons:

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