

# CAMC Virology Specimen Collection

## Nasopharyngeal Specimen Collection

1. Assemble the following materials
  - a. Universal/Viral Transport Media (UTM) – available in Virology or Outpatient Laboratory
  - b. Flocked swab
  - c. Cup/container of ice
  - d. Labels for specimen
2. Tilt head of patient back slightly, securing head if necessary.
3. Place flocked swab through the nose to the back of the nasopharynx, about half the length of the swab.
4. **Retain swab in place for 30 seconds and rotate a total of five (5) times** during procedure. This procedure should not be painful if properly performed. If additional information is needed, please call Virology.
5. Gently remove swab and place in the UTM tube.
6. Break off shaft of swab at score mark and close tube of viral transport media securely.
7. Label the specimen with the computer generated labels (if available), date, time, and collector ID.
  - a. If label is not available, write patient's first and last name, date of birth, and collector ID.
8. **Place UTM in cup of ice** and place in separate biohazard bag. Place bag with specimen in transport bag. **Ensure only one NP swab is placed in a specimen bag.**
9. Close bag and transport to Virology.

Note: Specimens should not lie around on desks, charts, or in the patient's room prior to transport. Many viruses are labile at room temperature and will rapidly "die" when transport is delayed.

## Collection of Lesion Specimens for Herpes (Varicella zoster or HSV)

1. Assemble the following materials:
  - a. Universal/Viral Transport Media (UTM) – available in Virology or Outpatient Laboratory
  - b. Cotton tipped applicators with **plastic shaft** or flocked swab  
**DO NOT USE WOOD APPLICATOR STICKS**
  - c. Cup of ice
  - d. Labels for specimen (if available)
2. Obtain swab of the lesion. The cells that contain virus are at the base of the lesion. If the lesion is vesicular or blister-like, you must open the lesion prior to swabbing. Do not contaminate the sample with blood if possible. Sampling more than one lesion increases the yield of the culture.
3. **Place swab(s) in viral transport media** and break off shaft of swab (stick). Be sure that the cap is secure to avoid specimen leaks.
4. Label the specimen with the computer generated labels (if available), date, time, and collector ID.
  - a. If label is not available, write patient's first and last name, date of birth, and collector ID.
5. **Place UTM in cup of ice** and place in separate biohazard bag. Place bag with specimen in transport bag. **Ensure only one swab is placed in a specimen bag.**
6. Transport to Laboratory. Varicella is especially labile and immediate transport to laboratory with prompt processing is essential.

## Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)

CSF fluid should be collected in a sterile tube. This tube should be labeled and placed on ice for immediate transport. **DO NOT PUT CSF IN VIRAL TRANSPORT MEDIA.**

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## **VIROLOGY COLLECTION NOTES**

- Samples placed in cups of ice may also be placed in a controlled refrigerator or cooler with ice/ice packs as long as they remain appropriately refrigerated and in separate specimen bags.
- Tubes of transport media should be securely closed in order to avert any leakage. Leaking specimens are not processed.
- Appropriate means should be provided for labeling the specimen. Computer generated labels should be used whenever possible.
- Sufficient specimen information, including patient's name, age, gender, hospital number, date and time of collection, physician's name, patient's immunological status, source of specimen, special pathogens for consideration, and relevant clinical diagnosis must be provided on requisitions for non-CAMC specimens. For CAMC specimens, relevant clinical information must be entered under the diagnosis comment at order entry.
- Standard Precautions guidelines must be followed when collecting and handling patient specimens.

## **CRITERIA FOR REJECTION OF VIROLOGY SPECIMENS:**

- Container NOT identified or labeled properly
- Specimen grossly contaminated, e.g., leaking container, damaged or improper container. Specimen received in culturette, anaerobic transport device, or other transport media.
- Excessive delay between specimen collection and arrival in the lab without proper transport media
- Specimens for Chlamydia trachomatis amplified DNA probe must be collected using the NAT collection kit or be the first voided 15-20 mL of urine.
- Plasma can be used for HIV and Hepatitis B serology only and is not acceptable for any other serology.
- Blood for heparin PF4 serology cannot be collected other than by venipuncture.
- Hemolyzed blood cannot be used for serology.

Positives by isolation, antigen, or nucleic acid detection for the following organisms are reported to the County or State Health Department as appropriate:

Chlamydia trachomatis

Mumps

Measles

Rubella

Polio

Arboviruses

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Borrelia burgdorferi positive with confirmation testing

Novel Influenza A

HIV

Hepatitis C Virus

Hepatitis B Surface Antigen

Hepatitis B Core Antibody IgM

Hepatitis A IgM Antibody

**For specimens not covered above or additional information, please contact the CAMC Virology Laboratory at 304-388-9618.**