BILH COVID-19 PCR TESTING
NASOPHARYNGEAL SWAB COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

April 12, 2020
Due to global shortages of swabs and transport media, COVID-19 test kits may look different

- **Swabs**
  - Copan flocked swab (preferred, when available)
  - APTIMA Unisex or Multitest swabs (are approved for this use)

- **Viral transport media**
  - Produced in BIDMC Microbiology Lab
  - Packaged with swabs

- **Call institutional distribution when more swabs are needed**
All COVID-19 test kits contain the same basic ingredients

- 1 nasopharyngeal swab (Copan flocked swab or other approved type, such as APTIMA)
- 1 tube of viral transport media (e.g., UTM-RT red top)
Gather all supplies prior to the procedure

- Private room
- Nasopharyngeal swab kit
- Personal protective equipment
- Ice (only for delayed specimen transport)
- Spare bio-bag for ice, if required
- Lab requisition
Wear required personal protective equipment

- Gown
- Gloves
- Eye protection (goggles, visor, face shield or mask with face shield)
- N95 respirator (if required at your institution)
Some helpful tips before you start

• Ask the patient if they have ever broken their nose
  ➢ If so, ask which nares they can breathe more easily through and swab that side

• Don’t let the patient blow their nose before obtaining the swab as it significantly reduces the number of cells in the specimen
Technique is important – Insert the swab gently

1. Gently insert the swab using a twisting motion
2. If notch is present, advance until it is at the tip of the patient’s nose (present on flocked swabs)
3. Swabs should stay in each nares for a minimum of 10 seconds

Note: Flocked swab has a molded “notch”, circled in red
Technique is important – Insert the swab gently

- Gently **rotate** the swab 2-3 times once in place to collect cells
Technique for removal of swab is important to absorb respiratory secretions

- Leave swab in nares for **10 seconds**
- **Twist swab** as you remove it
- Bend the swab like a “fishing pole” to scrape more cells from the nose as you exit
Insert the swab into the tube carefully

• Insert the swab into the tube of viral transport media
• Gently swirl the swab
Break off the swab to complete the collection process

• Break the swab by **gently pressing** it against the side of the tube

• If using a flocked swab, press the notch against the side of the tube to break
Package completed NP test kit for transport

• **Tighten cap securely on vial** so that viral transport media does not leak

  ➢ Note: Tubes that arrive with insufficient media cannot be run and repeat test will be needed

• Package on ice for transport

• Send via institutional sendout lab via courier to BIDMC Lab