How to Collect COVID

- Tests for COVID-19 require two swabs, routine NP and OP swabs. Order supplies (e.g. swab, viral transport media) via your normal channels as there is no formal collection kit. Do not use swabs with wooden shafts, calcium alginate, or cotton tips. **We are using the kit supplied by our lab at CMHC**
- Both swabs should be placed into the same vial of viral transport media.
- It is not necessary to send a patient to the local Emergency Department for testing. The Emergency Department should be reserved for patients who require clinical evaluation in an Emergency Department setting.
- Local health systems may develop specific mechanisms for consolidating testing areas and personnel.

**Below is specific guidance around how to take NP and OP swabs.**

The COVID-19 testing forms required by HETL can be found at https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/download-forms.htm

**PPE:** Mask, eye protection, gown, and gloves (patient should be wearing a mask)

**Supplies:**

- 1 - NP swab
- 1 - OP swab
- 1 - vial of viral transport media (Combine both swabs in same vial)
- HETL Clinical Requisition Form (front)
- SARS-CoV 2 (COVID-19) Specimen Submission Form

**NP Swab Collection:**

- Have patient lower mask to reveal nose, keeping mouth covered by mask.
- Open swab. Do not touch the tip.
- Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees.
- Gently insert NP swab into nostril until posterior nasopharynx is reached.
- Rotate swab several times, keeping swab in contact with nasopharyngeal wall.
- Have patient replace mask.
- Place NP swab into viral transport media and snap off swab handle at line to fit into vial. Screw on cap securely.
OP Swab Collection:

- Have patient remove mask briefly for specimen collection.
- Open swab. Do not touch the tip.
- Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees.
- Gently insert OP swab into back of throat and tonsillar area.
- Rub the swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx. Avoid touching tongue, teeth, and gums.
- Have patient replace mask.
- Place OP swab into viral transport media and snap off swab handle at line to fit into vial. Screw on cap securely.
- Label specimen.

Sign up for Maine CDC’s Health Alerts (HANs) at https://www.mainehan.org.