Step-by-Step Instructions

- Gather the appropriate supplies.
  - Personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab
  - Appropriate transport media
  - Facial tissue
- Explain the procedure to the patient and what they can expect to feel
- Gauge the approximate depth that you will have to insert the swab based on the patient’s anatomy
- Provide the patient with facial tissues and have them blow their nose to remove excess nasal secretions or mucus
- Ask the patient to tilt their head back
- Gently insert the swab along the nasal septum, just above the floor of the nasal passage to the nasopharynx until resistance is felt (Figure 1)
- Gently and slowly rotate the swab against the nasopharyngeal mucosa for 10-15 seconds
- Gently and slowly remove the swab
- Break the tip of the swab of into the appropriate transport container/medium
- Ensure the transport medium vial is labelled appropriately
- Send labeled specimen to the laboratory

Important Information

- When performing a nasopharyngeal swab for COVID-19 testing or screening, you must wear the appropriate PPE for Severe Respiratory Precautions: face shield or goggles, mask, gown, and gloves
- Please follow the steps for appropriate donning and doffing of PPE to avoid self-contamination
- The NP swab must be a flexible, flocked viral swab. It is not appropriate to use a cotton-tipped wooden swab.

Additional Resources

- Standard Work: Nasopharyngeal Swab Technique
- PROTOCOL: Pre-Procedure COVID-19 Testing Protocol (PolicyTech Reference #24776)
- Donning and Doffing Guidance
- Laboratory Test Directory
- Video: Swabbing Technique