

PAEDIATRIC NURSING PRACTICE MANUAL  
SECTION 5

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

5.4 RESPIRATORY TRACT SPECIMENS

5.4.2 COLLECTION OF A THROAT SWAB

**Aims**

1. To collect a throat swab for culture of micro organisms.
2. To ensure the safety and comfort of the child, during the procedure.

**Key Points**

1. Refer to [PNPM 1.11](#) Clinical holding and [PNPM 5.4.1](#) Collection of Naso-Pharyngeal Aspirate for correct holding procedures.
2. This is a clean [aseptic technique](#).
3. Anxiety may be experienced during this procedure. Consider the need for age appropriate methods to reduce these feelings (eg. adequate preparation and distraction) prior to the procedure.
4. For children requiring bacterial and viral swab – two swab sticks can be used together.

**Equipment**

Transtube swab(s) <sup>1</sup>  
Tongue depressor

**Additional equipment for virology swabs**

Viral transport medium (VTM)

PROCEDURE	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Positively identify the patient.	Refer to the Pathology Handbook Section 2 for guidance.
Place the child in a position facing a good light source.	Use of a pen torch can also help illuminate the pharynx.
Instruct child to slightly tilt head backward, open mouth wide, say 'ah' <sup>2</sup> and to breathe gently.	Promotes visualisation of the pharynx and relaxes the throat muscles.
Depress the anterior one third <sup>2</sup> of the child's tongue with tongue depressor.	<b>Note;</b> this may induce the gag reflex. <sup>2</sup>
Using a side to side motion, swab the tonsillar area, <sup>2</sup> and/or any area with a lesion or visible exudate.	Avoid contamination of the swab by the mouth or tongue.

PROCEDURE	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Withdraw the swab without touching adjacent structures. Place the swab/s in the holding tube.	Prevents contamination from outside micro organisms and erroneous culture results. <sup>2</sup>
Place swabs for virology in the VTM. <b>Note:</b> Do not place throat swabs for rapid strep testing in any transport medium. <sup>1</sup>	Check expiry date on VTM.
Ensure specimen is correctly labelled and send immediately to the laboratory in a Biohazard bag. Out of hours; refrigerate specimen.	Refer to Pathology Manual, General Guidelines Section 2.

### References:

1. PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA. Pathology Handbook. Perth: PathWest; 2009.
2. Bouska G, Kerestzes P & Wcisel M. Fundamental and Advanced Nursing Skills. 3rd ed. USA: Delmar Cengage Learning; 2010.