TEST INFORMATION
Collection of Respiratory Virus Specimen

Common Respiratory Viruses, novel Coronavirus (COVID-2019) plus Mycoplasma and Bordetella

To maximise test sensitivity SA Pathology recommends collection of a combined throat and deep nasal swab using a Viral Transport Swab (Green top).

Sputum may be more sensitive for some organisms (e.g. Bordetella, Mycoplasma) and is recommended when COVID-19 is highly suspected. Sputum or other deep respiratory specimen should be collected in patients who are negative on the swab specimen but have significant risk factors or continuing symptoms.

Personal protection
- Place a surgical mask on the patient and move patient to an isolated room if COVID-19, measles or highly pathogenic influenza is suspected.
- While reviewing the patient or collecting specimens from a low risk patient, use a disposable fluid resistant gown, gloves, surgical mask and eye protection.
- While collecting specimens, from high risk patients (e.g. when COVID-19 (with obvious symptoms) or highly pathogenic influenza (HPI) or measles is suspected) use airborne precautions, i.e eye protection and N95 mask.

Throat (posterior pharyngeal) & anterior nasal swab collection
1. Stand to one side and tilt the patient’s head back slightly.
2. Ask the patient to open the mouth and say “argh”
3. Gently depress the tongue with a tongue depressor.
   Note – this procedure can induce the gag reflex.
4. With a sweeping motion, swab the posterior pharyngeal wall and tonsilar pillars. Avoid the soft palate and avoid touching the tongue with the swab tip.
5. Using the same swab, insert the swab tip into the nostril as far as the anterior end of the nasal turbinate, parallel to the palate. (Approximately 2-3cm in adults).
6. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds then slowly withdraw using a rotating motion.
7. Put the swab directly into the transport tube.
8. Label the tube with patient full name, collection date, time and source. Sign the tube.

Request Form
Complete a request form with full patient details, date and time of collection, clinical history (including date of onset of symptoms) and request:
- Respiratory viruses (Note: testing will include COVID-19).
- Only add COVID-19 if patient meets criteria in CDCB guidelines.

Place the specimen in a SA Pathology biological hazard specimen bag. Use a double bag for high risk patients (COVID-19, HPI, measles). Send specimens promptly to SA Pathology.

Results
SA Pathology will test respiratory specimens at least twice daily with results available within 24 hours of arrival in the laboratory.