



Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Throat Specimen Collection

PRINCIPLE

Acute pharyngitis is an inflammatory syndrome of the pharynx caused by several different groups of microorganisms. A specimen is obtained to determine the etiology of pharyngitis, to determine a carrier state or detect shifts in flora of immuno-suppressed hosts.

PROCEDURE

1. Read the physician's orders carefully to determine what test(s) is (are) ordered.
2. Identify the patient.
Verify the patient's identity by asking the patient or guardian, if a child, to verbally state their name.
3. Determine from the test(s) ordered what supplies are needed.
Dry Sterile Swab or swabs supplied with test kit.
Tongue depressor
Gloves

Do not use swabs containing calcium alginate or collection systems containing charcoal or semisolid transport medium

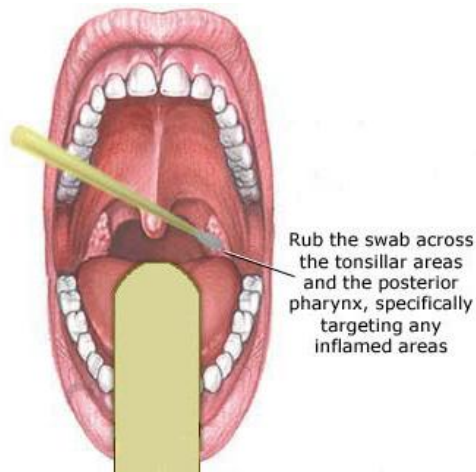
4. Briefly describe to the patient the collection procedure.

Judgment is needed here, as the explanation must be geared to the age of the patient and their comprehension level.

Explain to the patient:

Your doctor has requested that a throat specimen be collected. I (lab personnel) will need you (patient) to open your mouth completely and keep your tongue flat or at the bottom of your mouth. A tongue depressor will help you do this. Then a long swab will be used to firmly rub your tonsils and /or the back of your throat. This may make you gag a little bit but please try to keep your mouth completely open until the swab is taken out.

5. Collecting the specimen.
Success in collecting throat specimens depends on firmly and completely sampling an area of the inflamed throat.



- A. Open one end of the package containing the tongue depressor and pull it slightly out to loosen it from the package. Open the swab and hold it in one hand, then pick up the tongue depressor in the other hand.
 - B. Ask the patient to open his/her mouth fully open and tilt head back. You may need assistance with holding the head of an infant or small child.
 - C. Insert the tongue depressor blade into the patient's mouth to hold the tongue down.
 - D. Look at the back of the throat and the tonsil area for localized areas of inflammation (red,swollen) and exudate (areas of pus). These are the areas to swab as they will yield the best specimen.
 - E. Carefully but firmly, rub the swab over several areas of exudate, the tonsils and the posterior pharynx (the back of the throat).
 - F. When you are finished, withdraw the swab from the mouth taking care not to touch the teeth, gums, or inside of the cheeks. Withdraw the tongue depressor.
 - G. Insert the swab into the culturette and crush the transport medium vial in the bottom of the culturette. If a dry sterile swab is used for collection, and storage or transport is needed, the swab may be placed into a dry test tube immediately after collecting.
6. Labeling the Specimen.
Label the culturette with the patient's unique identifier;
- The patient's first and last name and
 - The patient's social security or DOB

SAFETY

Follow Universal/Standard Precautions for handling potentially infectious materials.

REFERENCE

Lexington Medical Center Microbiology Procedures Manual

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