COVID-19 Specimen Collection

Nasal Swab Materials
- Sterile polyester swab (aluminum or plastic shaft preferred)
- Viral transport media tube (should contain 1-3 ML of sterile viral transport medium)

Specimen Collection Procedure
1. Remove the swab from the container, being careful not to touch the soft end, which is the absorbent tip.
2. Insert the entire absorbent tip of the swab into the nostril, but do not insert the swab more than ¾ of an inch (1.5 cm) into the nose.
3. Slowly rotate the swab in a circular path against the inside of the nostril at least 4 times for a total of 15 seconds. Be sure to collect any nasal drainage that may be present on the swab.
4. Gently remove the swab.
5. Using the same swab, repeat steps 4-6 in the other nostril.
6. Place tip of the swab into sterile viral transport media tube and cut off the applicator stick. For swabs without a score line, break shaft 0.5” below rim of media transport tube.

Specimen Labeling
- Label must include individual’s name, date of birth, gender, collection date, site specimens
- Label the specimen on viral transport media tube and ensure cap on tube is tightly sealed. (Do not use a pencil or pen for labeling, as they can rub off or smear. Instead, use a bar code or permanent marker).

Packing
- Fill out paperwork in accordance with Santa Clara County guidelines.
- Include a frozen cold pack with the specimen(s).
- Refer to packing and shipping leaflet enclosed with sample

Storing
- Specimens should be immediately placed on refrigerant gel packs for transport to the public health laboratory.
- Keep specimens frozen prior to shipping.

Shipping
- Ship specimens for testing as soon as possible.
- For delayed specimen transport (>72h) specimens should be frozen at -94F or below or transported on dry ice.
- Ensure specimen will be received by the public health laboratory during normal business hours

For more information on COVID-19, visit: sccgov.org/coronavirus