

**Department of Microbiology  
Maidstone Hospital: 01622 - 224040**

Sample Collection for :     **Viral PCR Testing**

This pack consists of:

- a) Sterile sampling swab
- b) one vial of viral transport medium
- c) Instructions for use
- d) Request form

Viral Transport medium (VTM)

The viral transport media looks like picture below



**Respiratory Viruses (including suspected Influenza and ‘Swine flu’)**

**SAMPLING – Take one set per patient (ie one set = nose & throat)**

1. Swab the **Throat** using the plastic shaft swab: swab both tonsils and the posterior pharynx vigorously: start on right site at tonsil and sweep swab around posterior nasopharyngeal mucosa to left tonsil. The patient will likely gag if the specimen is properly taken.
2. Then swab the **Nose** using the same swab: insert into the nostril, parallel to the palate (less than 2.5cm) and leave in place for a few seconds. Then slowly withdraw with a rotation motion. Both nostrils should be sampled with the swab.
3. Place the swab in the transport medium and break off.
4. Label the vial clearly and place in the sealable part of the specimen bag.
5. Complete a request form in the normal way but indicate ‘Suspected Flu’ or ‘Swine Flu’ and place in the wallet section of the specimen bag.
6. The specimen may now be transported to the Microbiology laboratory in the normal manner
7. If specimen is taken outside normal hours, please refrigerate and send the following day.

## Non Respiratory Specimens

### Ear swab (vesicles or part of Bell's palsy investigation)

1. Place the swab in the ear canal over any vesicle. Rotate gently over the vesicles / ulcers. Place the swab in VTM and snap off.

### Eye swab

Moisten the swab in sterile saline before taking the specimen. Never moisten swab in VTM. Place the swab in VTM and snap off

### Mouth swab (vesicle lesions, ulcers or inflamed areas)

1. For HSV, enterovirus or VZV - swab the ulcer or vesicle

### Surface swabs and skin swabs (vesicular rash)

1. Burst a vesicle using a sterile needle and collect with a swab or aspirate the fluid contents of the vesicle
2. Alternatively, scrape the base of the vesicle or ulcer with a swab so that cellular material is collected. Inoculate this fluid / cellular material into VTM.

Always state the site, distribution and nature of the vesicle on the request form