19.4: Oropharyngeal Specimen Collection

The oropharynx is the part of the throat at the back of the mouth behind the oral cavity. It includes the back third of the tongue, the soft palate, the side and back walls of the throat, and the tonsils. When obtaining a specimen from this area, it is important to avoid the tongue and teeth. Depending on the test ordered, the nurse may obtain the specimen from the tonsils alone or the posterior pharynx (throat) and the tonsils. Keep in mind that if you are ever unsure about how to accurately obtain a specimen, lab technicians are a great resource.

See the “Checklist for Oropharyngeal Testing” for additional details about performing the procedure.

Life Span Considerations

Infants and Children

Specimen collection on infants and children may require the support of another health care provider or a parent. Educate the patient and the parent about the procedure and the expectations if the parent decides to assist with the specimen collection. During specimen collection, it’s important that the patient is immobile to prevent injury to the nasal cavity, nasopharyngeal, or oropharynx.

Note

View Medscape’s YouTube video to review oropharyngeal testing:

How to Perform a Throat Swab

2. Medscape. (2018, August 23). *How to perform a throat swab on a patient.* [Video]. YouTube. All rights reserved. [https://youtu.be/-uyBJ0nv4oI](https://youtu.be/-uyBJ0nv4oI)