

Herpes Simplex Virus 1 and 2 (HSV-1 & HSV-2) Sample Collection Guidelines for Swabs

Acceptable Specimen Sources for Swabs

Cutaneous and mucocutaneous lesions of: Skin, Oral (lips, gum, tongue), Genital, Anal/Rectal/Perineum, Eye/Conjunctiva.

Swab Type

Sterile cotton, polyester, or rayon on a plastic shaft are acceptable (see example below). **Calcium alginate swabs are not acceptable.**



Collection/Transport Container

Universal Transport Medium (UTM). Unused containers can be stored at room temperature. **Use before expiry date (should be printed on the container).** Equivalent Substitutes for COPAN UTM include the following: BD UVT, Remel M4, Remel M4RT, Remel M5, or Remel M6. (see example below)



Specimen Collection

Swabs should be collected by the health care provider. This can be done in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

Storage/Transport After Collection

Keep samples refrigerated 2-8°C. Transport on ice.

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Collection of a Swab Sample

1. Select a lesion (or lesions) that are filled with fluid (see picture below).



2. Clean area with sterile water or saline, if required. **Do not use alcohol or other skin disinfectants to clean the area.**
3. Using a sterile needle or disposable scalpel, gently de-roof the vesicle.
 - a. **If the site is ulcerated or infected, remove the crust and discard**, remove the pus with a sterile swab and continue from [Step 4](#) with a **fresh sterile swab**.
 - b. In the absence of fluid-filled lesions, pick the crusts of lesions that appear partially crusted over and place them into the UTM tube. Continue from [Step 4](#).
4. Use the sterile swab to collect the fluid from the lesion and the lesion itself to collect cellular material where the virus may be present.
5. If multiple distinct sites (i.e., face, chest, perineum, etc.), are being sampled.
 - a. Use separate swabs for each site and **put each swab into a separately labeled UTM container.**
 - b. **Each container with distinct collection sites will need a separate order.**
6. Place the swab(s) into the UTM and screw the cap on tightly to prevent leakage. **(It may be necessary to cut the top of the swab to get the cap to screw down completely).**
7. Label the swab container(s) with the patient's full first and last name, site of the lesion, and Medical Record Number (MRN) and/or full date of birth (DOB).
8. **Note that samples without two patient identifiers will delay testing or may result in an outright rejection of the sample.**