

How to Collect a Throat Swab for Culture

1. Prepare a clean work surface and gather supplies.
2. Perform hand hygiene.
3. If performing a throat culture on a symptomatic person, consider wearing a surgical mask.
4. Wear clean gloves and loosen the swab collection container, if applicable.
5. Ask the person to tilt their head back slightly, open their mouth as wide as possible.
6. Depress the person's tongue and ask them to say, "Ahh."
7. Collect the throat culture by rubbing the sterile swab tip on the surface of one or both tonsils, the tonsillar pillars, or the posterior pharyngeal wall. Other areas of the oral pharynx and mouth are not acceptable sites, and could lead to false negative results.

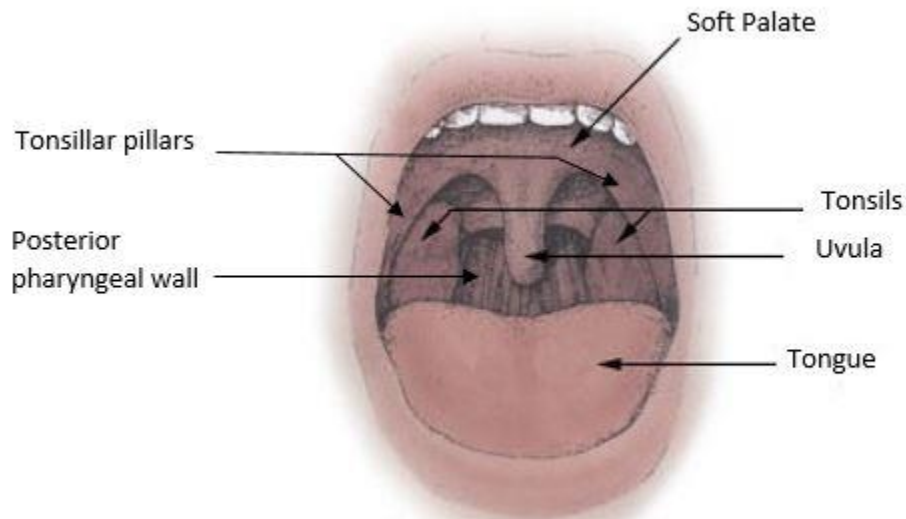


Image modified from National Cancer Institute SEER Training Modules (2000). Cancer Registration & Surveillance Modules. Available at <https://training.seer.cancer.gov/anatomy/lymphatic/components/tonsils.html>

8. Gently move the swab without touching the teeth, gums or tongue.
9. Place the swab immediately into the sterile tube or collection device using aseptic technique.
10. Label the collection tube with patient name, date of birth, source and date of collection.
11. Refrigerate specimens until ready for packaging and shipping.

References:

- Bisno A.L., et al. (2002). Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Group A Streptococcal Pharyngitis. *Clinical Infectious Disease*, 35: 113-25.
- Smeltzer, S.C., et al. (2008). *Brunner & Suddarth's Textbook of Medical-Surgical Nursing*. Eleventh Edition. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: Philadelphia.