

DPHHS Technical Guidance on Pertussis: Testing

What is pertussis real-time PCR testing?

- Detects DNA sequences of *Bordetella spp.* (including *B. pertussis*, *B. parapertussis*, and *B. holmesii*).
- Provides timely results compared to culture (usually 1-2 days from receipt at MTPHL).

When is PCR testing indicated?

- Test only **symptomatic** patients.
- Collect specimen up through 3–5 weeks after cough onset.
- PCR testing is not indicated after 5 days of antibiotic treatment.

What about culturing for pertussis?

- Culturing can require up to 7 days for a result and is no longer being performed at MTPHL.

What about Serology testing?

- Serology testing is not standardized and not available at MTPHL.
- Contact public health before considering use of serology to test for pertussis.

When are results available?

- PCR results are typically available the same day the specimen is received at MTPHL Mon–Fri.
- STAT weekend testing is available upon consultation.
- Collection supplies available upon request.

Who should I contact for testing information?

- MTPHL lab toll free number 1-800-821-7284

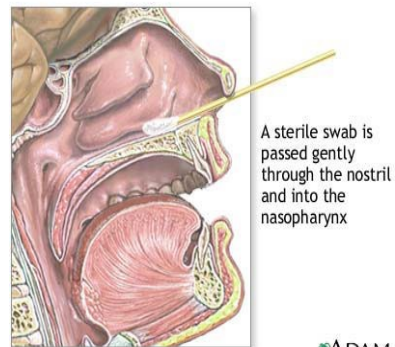
References:

1. MT Public Health Laboratory, Laboratory Services Manual
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Manual for the Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases. Chapter 10: Pertussis; October 2017
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. Pertussis. Red Book: 2018 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. Pickering LK, ed. 31st ed. pg.62001

How do I collect a specimen for Pertussis PCR?

Collect specimen by **nasopharyngeal (NP) swab**:

- Use a flexible wire with a small dacron swab.
- Insert the swab into the nostril (see picture).
- Slide NP swab posteriorly into the back of the nasopharynx.
- Slowly rotate swab while withdrawing NP swab.



ADAM.

- Place swab in sterile test tube **without** transport media.
- **Note:** Do not submit nasal or throat swabs.
- Nasopharyngeal washes/aspirates may be tested, but are **not** recommended

How do I transport the specimen to the laboratory?

- Label specimens with name and date of birth and complete laboratory requisition. Enclose specimen in a biohazard bag and appropriate shipping container.
- Transport NP swabs in sterile container at **Ambient** (room) temperature
- **Note:** If sending nasal washes/aspirates, transport in sterile container in **cold** condition (coolant packs in Styrofoam cooler)