

Microbiology Test

Label

Each specimen should have a label bearing the following information firmly attached to the specimen container:

- PATIENT NAME
- PHYSICIAN
- CULTURE SITE
- DATE AND TIME COLLECTED AND INITIALS OF COLLECTOR

Collection Times

- The optimal times for specimen collection must be based upon both the type of infectious disease process and the ability of the laboratory to expertly process specimens. The Microbiology Laboratory is not as well staffed during evening and late night hours. Specimens collected late in the evening often do not produce adequate growth by the next morning. STAT testing is available at all times for critical tests including blood cultures, body fluid Gram stains, etc.
- The first, early-morning sputum and urine specimens are optimal for recovery of acid-fast bacteria, fungi, and other pathogens. Specimens collected at other times are acceptable.
- The following specimens should be collected only after consultation with the microbiology department:
 - Viral cultures
 - Blood for serum-killing power test or antibiotic drug assays
 - Recovery of chlamydia, rickettsia, or other unusual organisms

Collection Procedures

- All specimens must be collected in appropriate sterile containers.
- Anaerobic cultures are best collected by aspirating abscess fluid with a sterile syringe and needle. Syringe needles can be capped with the needle safety device and submitted for culture. If swabs are used, they must be placed immediately into gel-end transport tubes.
- Sputum specimens must contain lower respiratory secretions. Patients must be instructed to cough deeply. The mouth should be rinsed with water, and dentures should be removed before the specimen is collected. **First-morning** specimen is preferred.

- Clean-catch urine specimens should be collected by the patient after specific instructions by a nurse or aide.
- Surface lesions (wounds) must be sampled carefully. It is imperative that surface lesion be opened and advancing edge of lesion firmly sampled. Pus must be expressed onto swab. Surface lesions are unsuitable for anaerobic studies.
- Wound specimens submitted for anaerobic culture must be submitted in an appropriate anaerobic tube or in the syringe used to collect and aspirate.
- Throat swabs for rapid streps must be submitted **without** the ampule being crushed.

Specimen Transport

- It is important that culture specimens be processed as soon as possible after collection, preferably within 1 hour. If longer delays are unavoidable, a suitable transport medium must be used. If urine specimens will be delayed, they should be refrigerated.
- Dry swabs are unacceptable for cultures. Use CULTURETTES® with ampules crushed.
- All specimens should be placed in a biohazard transport bag to bring to the laboratory.

Laboratory Criteria for Rejection & Laboratory Response

- Unlabeled or improperly labeled specimen must be recollected.
- Oropharyngeal-contaminated sputum. Notify physician or R.N. and request a repeat. Process only on the request of physician.
- Obvious foreign contamination. Request a recollection.
- Duplicate specimens on same day for the same request. Place specimen in refrigerator. Call submitter and indicate duplication. Culture only on the request of the physician.
- Specimen unsuitable for culture requested, ie, anaerobe request from aerobic transport. Notify submitter and process only on the request of the physician.
- Quantity not sufficient. Notify submitter for more specimen.