

New Collection Containers for Bacterial Stool Culture

Dr. Diana Whellams, Medical Microbiologist, MD, FRCPC

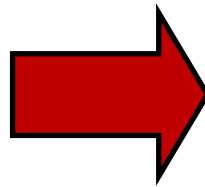
LifeLabs is transitioning to using Copan fecal swab containers for the collection of stool for bacterial culture starting October 3rd. Currently, samples are collected using a Cary Blair Medium container (with a white lid and pink liquid).

For the time being, we will continue to accept the old containers Cary Blair Medium, with the goal of phasing them out completely in late 2022.

Please continue to use the current containers for *C. difficile* testing (Clean vial) and ova and parasite testing (SAF).



CURRENT stool collection container for bacterial culture: Cary Blair Medium container



NEW stool collection container for bacterial culture: Copan Fecal Swab

This change is the first part of a larger provincial initiative to merge gastrointestinal (GI) testing for viral, bacterial, and parasitic pathogens into a single, panel-based test using nucleic acid amplification (NAAT) testing. Eventually, a single Copan Fecal swab will be used for stool sample collection for *C. difficile* testing, viral GI pathogen testing, bacterial GI pathogen testing, and most parasite (O & P) testing. This will result in simpler collection for physicians and patients, broader detection of GI pathogens (especially viruses), and increased sensitivity for detecting some organisms.

Additional information about the roll-out of a single, panel-based gastrointestinal test at LifeLabs will be provided in the coming months.

To order LifeLabs collection devices, including the new Copan Fecal Swab for bacterial culture, go to the supplies page on the Lifelabs website ([Supplies – LifeLabs](#)) for ordering forms or call the Customer Care Centre at 1-800-431-7206.

Rejection of Unpreserved Urine for Culture; Boric Acid as an Alternative

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Boric acid tube for urine culture

Urine cultures are one of the most common specimens we see in the microbiology lab. The quality of urine culture results depends in part on how rapidly they are processed; delays in transport can cause overgrowth of bacteria and misleading results, which is why samples should always be refrigerated while awaiting transport.

One solution to this problem is pouring off neat urine into tubes containing boric acid as a preservative. Boric acid helps stabilize bacterial growth, allowing for longer transport time to the laboratory.

As a quality measure, as of October 2022, LifeLabs will no longer accept unpreserved, refrigerated urine samples for culture if they are >2 days old. This is to ensure that urine culture results are not overgrown with enteric bacteria.

Boric acid has some limitations. If only a low volume of urine (<5 ml) is collected, then pour off to a boric acid tube is **not** recommended since the ratio of urine to preservative must be maintained to provide accurate results. Similarly, boric acid tubes should not be used for Chlamydia and gonorrhea testing or urinalysis, so in these cases, an unpreserved urine sample should be submitted.

Boric acid tubes can be obtained free of charge via the supplies page on the Lifelabs website ([Supplies – LifeLabs](#)) or by contacting LifeLabs' Customer Care Centre at 1-800-431-7206.

Healthcare Providers Conference 2022—Thank you!

Dr. Miguel Imperial, Medical Microbiologist, MD, FRCPC

After a long hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LifeLabs hosted it's annual Healthcare Providers Conference at the Civic Hotel in Surrey. The evening included a catered dinner as LifeLabs doctors presented on a number of topics ranging from genetic testing in pregnancy to hyponatremia to sexually-transmitted infections.

We want to thank all of the attendees for taking the time to join us for the evening; it was a great opportunity to make the connection between the laboratory and the clinic. We look forward to seeing you at next year's conference!

