COLLECTION OF SWABS FOR CULTURE

Collection of Specimens for Microbiology

Proper transport and storage of specimens are prerequisites for reliable culture results. Ensure that the requisition and specimen are labeled with:

- patient's full name
- date of birth or health card number
- **source of specimen**
- collection date and time

The examination requested should be specified on the requisition.

Information concerning anti-microbial therapy or allergy, pregnancy, clinical diagnosis, or underlying disease should also be noted.

Specimens should be transported promptly to LifeLabs Laboratory. Delays to processing, beyond the recommended acceptable holding times, will compromise culture results.

All specimens and body fluids are considered potentially hazardous. They should be treated as if capable of causing disease. Clinical information or patient history as provided by the physician determines the scope of the laboratory investigation by ensuring that all laboratory services are relevant or adequate for each clinical situation.

Microbiology Swab & Collection Containers:



Swabs C&S- Amies Transport Medium Charcoal or Clear Gel

COLLECTION OF SWABS FOR CULTURE

Swabs for Culture

Swabs from the genital tract, throat, eye, ear, nose, and superficial wounds (e.g., sores, boils, and rashes) should be transported to the laboratory in the transport medium provided by the local LifeLabs Laboratory (charcoal or clear gel transport medium).

The patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, the anatomical site swabbed and date and time of collection should be specified on the requisition and specimen container to assist in the evaluation of bacteria isolated. Also include any information concerning pregnancy or antibiotic drug allergies or therapy on the requisition.

All swabs have expiry dates, so rotation of stock is important. Dry swabs received for culture will **not** be processed unless received within one hour of collection.

Collection of Wound Swabs

- Gentle cleansing of a skin wound prior to sample collection is recommended to reduce commensal flora contamination.
- Purulent exudates must be expressed onto swabs.
- Place the swab into the transport media.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at **room temperature** and **submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.**

Collection of Eye Swabs

- Collect before topical or anesthetics are applied.
- Swab pus or purulent discharge taken from the lower inverted lid.
- Place the swab into the transport media.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at **room temperature** and **submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.**

COLLECTION OF SWABS FOR CULTURE

Collection of Ear Swabs

- Swab the external ear canal.
- Place the swab into the transport media.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs **refrigerated at 2-8 ºC** and **submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.**

Collection of Throat Swabs

- Swab the tonsillar area and/or posterior pharynx.
- Place the swab into the transport media.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at **room temperature** and **submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.**

Genital Swab Cultures include

Organism/Syndrome Investigated	Source of Specimen	Collection
Neisseria gonorrhoeae	Endocervical, Urethral	Amies Transport Swab (Charcoal or clear gel)
Yeast, Bacterial Vaginosis	Post Vaginal Vault	Amies Transport Swab (Charcoal or clear gel)
Prenatal Screening for Group B Streptococcus at 35-37 weeks gestation	Combined Vaginal/Rectal	Amies Transport Swab (Charcoal or clear gel)

Collection of Urethral Specimens for Culture of Neisseria gonorrhoeae

- Express exudates from the urethra and collect it on a swab.
  If exudate is unavailable, insert an urethrogenital swab about 2 cm into the urethra, gently rotate it and remove.
- Place the swab into the transport medium.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at room temperature and submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.

COLLECTION OF SWABS FOR CULTURE

Collection of Endocervical Swabs for Culture of Neisseria gonorrhoeae

- Moisten the speculum with warm water. Lubricants may be toxic to *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. Remove any mucous or vaginal material.
- Gently compress the cervix with the blades of the speculum.
- Collect the endocervical discharge onto the swab or insert the swab into the cervix.
- Place the swab into the transport medium.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at room temperature and submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.

Collection of Vaginal Swabs for Yeast, Bacterial Vaginosis & Trichomonas

- Wipe away any excessive amount of secretion.
- Obtain secretions from the mucosal membrane with a swab.
- Place the swab into the transport medium.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at room temperature and submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.

Collection of Vaginal/Rectal Swabs for Prenatal Group B Streptococcus Screening at 35-37 Weeks Gestation

- Do not use a speculum for collection.
- Swab the lower vagina (vaginal introitus).
- Using the same swab or a different swab, insert swab through the anal sphincter to swab the rectum.
- Place the swab(s) into the transport medium.
- Label swab with patient's full name, date of birth or health card number, source of specimen and date and time of collection.
- Maintain swabs at room temperature and submit to the laboratory WITHIN 24 hours of collection.
- Clearly indicate on the requisition that specimens are for Group B Streptococcal culture.
- Requisition should indicate a penicillin allergy when applicable.