Important Specimen Collection Requirements for Stool Analysis

Analysis of stool samples for pathogenic bacteria, parasites and viruses, as well as leukocyte detection, requires properly collected and transported specimens. As a general rule, stool samples for any laboratory analysis should be submitted to the lab within 2 hours of collection in a dry, clean container. If transportation to the lab within 2 hours is not possible, the use of commercially prepared transport systems such as parapak containers is recommended for culture and ova and parasite studies only. Recent recommendations indicate that if parapaks are not available, stool for culture and/or ova and parasites MAY be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.

A parapak containing Cary-Blair transport medium is required for stool culture. This parapak must be submitted within 72 hours of collection. Ova and Parasite parapaks (2 vials, one containing formalin and the other PVA) are required for parasite evaluation, which includes Giardia and Cryptosporidia. The Ova and Parasite parapaks must be submitted within 7 days of collection. Specimens for Ova and Parasite evaluation should be submitted from 3 consecutive days since shedding of ova and parasites may be intermittent. If a stool aspirate is collected, the specimen MUST reach the lab within 2 hours of collection. ALL SPECIMENS SHOULD BE CLEARLY LABELED WITH NAME, DATE AND TIME OF COLLECTION.

STOOLS SUBMITTED FOR VIRUSES (ROTAVIRUS INCLUDED), C. DIFFICILE OR LEUKOCYTES CANNOT BE SUBMITTED IN PARAPAKS. A CLEAN, DRY CONTAINER IS REQUIRED. IF SPECIMENS CANNOT BE BROUGHT TO THE LAB WITHIN 2 HOURS, THE SPECIMEN MAY BE REFRIGERATED FOR UP TO 24 HOURS. (C. DIFFICILE SPECIMENS MAY BE REFRIGERATED UP TO 72 HOURS).

Stools for Occult blood are to be submitted in a clean dry container within 2 hours and NEVER REFRIGERATED. Optimal specimen is a Hemoccult slide (commercially prepared gulac test) inoculated at the time the specimen is passed.

GC/Chlamydia DNA Probe Analysis-APTIMA

The APTIMA DNA probe system is only approved for the following sources:
- Chlamydia: urethral (male), cervix (female) and urine (male and female)
- GC (Neisseria gonorrhea): urethral (male), cervix (female) and urine (male and female)

No other sources for the APTIMA DNA probe system will be accepted. Testing of sources other than those listed above has not been approved by the FDA. It is imperative that the source of the specimen be indicated on the requisition or source field in Cerner or Invision. Collection kits provided by APTIMA must be used. Collection guides for swab specimens and urine specimens are available separately. Please ask the Microbiology Lab or Laboratory Client Services for instruction cards.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

Using the mini-tip swab provided with the Copan VTM (viral transport medium) collection kit, the physician or designee should collect a nasopharyngeal specimen. The swab must be inserted into the nasopharynx and not just into the anterior nares. Swabs from the throat are also not acceptable. After collection the swab should be inserted into the VTM tube and the tube recapped securely. Transport to the lab should be as soon as possible but the specimen in VTM may be refrigerated for up to 24 hours if necessary. The specimen is satisfactory for a respiratory viral panel if the RSV is negative and the physician requests it. All positive results are called to the physician.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

All physicians suspecting pertussis as a diagnosis should send the patient to the Danbury Hospital Laboratory’s Testing Center. NO pertussis specimens should be collected in offices. It is important that the nasopharyngeal swab be collected by a trained microbiology technologist and inoculated immediately only appropriate culture media at bedside. A slide for direct fluorescent antibody testing will be made at the same time. Diagnosis is made by either a positive direct fluorescent antibody stain or by positive growth on culture media. Stains are performed once daily. The cultures are held for 7 days before being finalized as negative. All positive cultures and direct fluorescent stains are called to the physician.
**Affirm**

The Affirm DNA probe system is approved for samples collected from the vaginal fornix only, to rule out infections due to Gardnerella vaginalis, Trichomonas vaginalis and Candida species. Samples must be collected via the AFFIRM VPIII Ambient Temperature Transport System. Samples should be transported to the laboratory as soon as possible but are acceptable if performed within 48 hours when the sample is stored at room temperature.

**Rapid Strep**

Red capped double swab (Remel) collected from peritonsillar area. Use of the double swab allows for culture of the same specimen when the rapid strep result is negative.

**Rapid Flu A&B**

Using the mini-tab swab provided with the Copan VTM (viral transport medium) collection kit, the physician or designee should collect a nasopharyngeal specimen. The swab must be inserted into the nasopharynx and not just into the anterior nares. Swabs from the throat are also not acceptable. After collection the swab should be inserted into the VTM tube and the tube recapped securely. Transport to the lab should be as soon as possible but the specimen in VTM may be refrigerated for up to 24 hours if necessary. The specimen is satisfactory for a respiratory viral panel if the RSV is negative and the physician requests it. All positive results are called to the physician.

**Urine Cultures/Urinalysis**

Unless specimen can reach the lab within 2 hours of collection, or be refrigerated for 2-8 hours, use of a preservative such as the Boritex collection system should be utilized to maintain sample integrity. The Boritex collection container is sufficient for both culture and urinalysis. A clean catch sample should be collected and transferred to the Boritex container. Urine should be added up to the fill line. The sample should then be capped and mixed well until the preservative tablet in the bottom of the container dissolves. Once in the Boritex container, the sample is stable at room temperature for up to 48 hours.

**Wound Cultures**

When possible, actual fluids or pieces of tissue or bone should be submitted. If this is not possible or the wound is superficial, a culturette may be used. The source of the specimen MUST be indicated to allow for proper evaluation. For example, “left superficial lower leg” should be used instead of “wound”. For suspected infections with anaerobic organisms, an anaerobic transport system (A.C.T.I-Remel) is available.

**MRSA PCR Screens**

The only two approved sources for MRSA screens via PCR are nares and skin/soft tissue. The specimen must be collected on a red capped COPAN double swab and submitted to the lab as soon as possible.