



General Infectious Disease Specimen Collection Instructions

- Whenever possible, collect specimens prior to administration of antimicrobials.
- Collect the specimen at optimal times (e.g. early morning sputum for AFB culture).
- Collect the appropriate sample type and in a quantity sufficient for the test to be ordered.
- Use only sterile techniques for collection and transport of any specimen that may require culture.
- If appropriate, decontaminate the skin surface. Use 70 percent alcohol and chlorhexidine or 1-2 percent tincture of iodine to prepare the site. Allow a contact time of two minutes to maximize the antiseptic effect.
- Collect the specimen from the actual site of infection, avoiding contamination from adjacent tissue or secretions.
- Submit only tissue or aspirate from the infected site.
- Remove needle and cap collection syringe before sending.
- Avoid sending mixed cultures for identification and/or susceptibility.
- Minimize transport time.
- Ensure the appropriate environment will be maintained between collection of specimens and delivery to the laboratory.
- Formalin is unacceptable for any specimen requiring culture.