

CHILDLAB

Guide to Laboratory Services

STOOL CULTURE

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Stool is generally submitted to the Microbiology Lab to diagnose the agent of acute infectious diarrhea. A wide variety of microorganisms may be involved including bacteria, viruses, or protozoans. Collection of specimens for the latter two groups of microorganisms is described in other areas of this Guide. The following procedures are designed for recovery of common bacterial agents including Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter, Yersinia, Aeromonas and E.coli 0157.

II. SPECIMEN COLLECTION:

- (1) Generally, it is preferable to obtain passed stool directly into a clean cardboard, plastic, or glass container; however, feces can also be collected from a clean bedpan provided it is free of any residual soap, detergent, or disinfectant and there is no contamination by urine.
- (2) At least 2-4 mL of liquid stool or 2-4 gm (more, if possible) of formed stool should be placed in a Cary-Blair transport medium vial. Those portions of stool which contain pus, blood, or mucus should be submitted for examination.
- (3) If passed stool is not readily obtainable, a rectal swab may be obtained with the general culture swab dual culture swab system swabs. The dual swabs are passed beyond the anal sphincter, carefully rotated for 10 seconds, and withdrawn. **Be sure the swab tips contact the transport fluid-filled sponge at the bottom of the swab tube holder.**
- (4) **A minimum of two swabs should be collected;** this allows adequate material for culture. **Please note that although swabs are acceptable for culture, they are unacceptable for ova and parasite exam.**