## PURPOSE:

The following are guidelines for the collection of specimens for culture and sensitivity (C&S) including specimen type, collection container, storage temperature and expected Turnaround Time (TAT).

## POLICY:

1. Turnaround Times are defined as the time the specimen is received in the Microbiology Laboratory to the time the result is reported.
2. Specimens are set up throughout the day; however, due to time needed for incubation, routine specimens received in the microbiology laboratory after 19:30 may not be processed until the following day.
3. Reading of Gram Stains will be performed on the 12 – 8 Evening Shift. All STAT gram stains must be read without exception. This includes: positive blood cultures, CSF's, fluids or any gram indicated as STAT by the physician.
    a. From 12-4: All gram stains, including BV's, will be read during this time by the evening shift technologist.
    b. From 4-8: All efforts must be made to read additional wound gram stains.
    *Any wound gram stains that the 12 – 8 technologist was unable to read must be read the next day by the wound bench technologist before new wound cultures are read.
    c. If the 12-8 technologist is required to do the TB bench, all BV grams will be read by the urine bench technologist and all wound grams will be read by the wound bench technologist.

*If a technologist not working the 12 – 8 shift has completed their assigned duties and has time to assist with gram stains they should speak to the 12 – 8 technologist and ask if they require assistance.

**Please note:** Failure to adhere to these turnaround times is unacceptable and will be investigated accordingly.

| Specimen Type | Container and Storage Temperature | Preliminary | Final Negative | Final Positive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blood culture | Bactec blood culture bottles<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp, do not cool or freeze | Positive phoned immediately,<br>Negative 48 hours | 5 days | 48 hours after isolation |
| | BacT Alert bottles<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp, do not cool or freeze<br>Please note: The only indicator of a positive culture with manual cultures will be bacteria seen in gram. Therefore, it is imperative that the gram stains be prepared and read as soon as possible. | Positive phoned immediately,<br>Negative 48 hours | 7 days | 48 hours after isolation |
| Bronchial lavage, washing, aspirate | Sterile container<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>4-8 °C | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 48 hours | 48 hours |
| Catheter tips I.V. | Sterile container,<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>4-8 °C | N/A | 96 hours | 48 hours |
| CSF | Sterile screw top tubes<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp.<br>Deliver to lab immediately | Gram stain: ≤ 1 hour<br>Culture: 24 hours | 72 hours | 48 hours after isolation |
| Cervical/ (N.gonorrhoeae only) | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | N/A | 72 hours | 72 hours |
| Ear | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 48 hours | 48 hours |
| Eye | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 48 hours | 48 hours |

| Specimen Type | Container and Storage Temperature | Preliminary | Final Negative | Final Positive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fluids | Sterile container<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | Gram stain:<br>≤ 1 hr.<br>Culture:<br>24 hours | 5 days | 48 hours after isolation |
| | Bactec blood culture bottles<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | Positive phoned immediately,<br>Negative<br>48 hours | 5 days | 5 days |
| Group B Screen | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | N/A | 48 hours | 72 hours |
| IUD | Sterile container<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp | N/A | 10 days | 10 days |
| MRSA | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp | N/A | 24 hours | 24 hours |
| Mouth | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | N/A | 48 hours | 48 hours |
| Nasal | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>Room temp. | N/A | 24 hours | 48 hours |
| Sputum | Sterile container<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>4-8 °C | Gram stain:<br>24 hours<br>Culture:<br>24 hours | 48 hours | 48 hours |
| Stool: Culture | Enteric transport media<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>4-8 °C | N/A | 72 hours | 72 - 96 hours |
| Stool: C.diff. | Sterile container<br>Specimen holding temperature:<br>4-8 °C | N/A | 24 hours | 24 hours |

| Specimen Type | Container and Storage Temperature | Preliminary | Final Negative | Final Positive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Throat | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | N/A | 24 hours | 24 hours |
| Urethra | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | Gram stain: 24 hours | 72 hours | 72 hours |
| Urine | Sterile container or Urine Transport Tube<br>Specimen holding temperature: Fresh urines should be held at 4-8 °C | N/A | Midstream/ Indwelling Catheter: 24 hours<br>Suprapubic/ Straight/ Intermittent Catheter: 48 hours | 48 hours |
| Vaginal - BV | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | N/A | 24 hours | 24 hours |
| Vaginal – C&S | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 72 hours | 72 hours |
| VRE | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | N/A | 48 hours | 72 hours |
| Wound – Superficial | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 48 hours | 48 - 72 hours |
| Wound – Deep | Sterile swab in C&S transport medium.<br>Specimen holding temperature: Room temp | Gram stain: 24 hours<br>Culture: 24 hours | 5 days | 5 days |

## REFERENCES:


1. Clinical Microbiology Procedures Handbook, 4th edition, ASM Press, 2016


## REVISION HISTORY:

| REVISION | DATE | Description of Change | REQUESTED BY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | 26 Apr 2017 | Initial Release | L. Steven |
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