Collection of Samples for Anaerobes
Guidelines for Physicians

NOTE: aerobic culture and sensitivity will be performed on the anaerobic samples. A separate aerobic sample is not required. Collect samples under aseptic conditions; avoid contamination with indigenous anaerobic flora from skin and mucous membranes.

Acceptable samples:
- Abscess material, Needle aspirates
- Tissue, Deep wounds – deep collection (greater than 1 cm deep)
- Urine – suprapubic aspirate

Unacceptable samples:
- Superficial swabs
- Samples collected from or via sites containing normal flora: e.g., mouth, throat, sputum, bowel, urethra, vagina, cervix, rectum, perianal area, voided or catheterized urine

Collection container(s):
- Anaerobic Transport Media (PRAS):
  - Do Not use if the media is lavender – this indicates anaerobic conditions have been compromised
  - Do Not use past expiry date or if packaging is no longer intact
Fluid and tissue may also be submitted in a sterile screw-capped container

Collection Instructions for Pus and Fluid:
- Disinfect rubber septum with alcohol
- Using syringe, aspirate pus or fluid aseptically. Expel air from syringe
- Puncture rubber septum with needle and inject sample into anaerobic transport media
- Ensure the syringe needle is disposed of appropriately

Collection Instructions for Tissue and Swabs:
- Collect tissue or sample with sterile swab if necessary
- Note: collection with a swab is not recommended for isolation of anaerobes and should be surgically obtained for optimal results when an aspirate is not feasible
- Remove screw cap from the anaerobic transport media and insert tissue or swab deeply into bottom of medium
- Break off swab stick, if swab used, at neck of tube
- Re-cap tube

Labeling the sample:
Label sample container(s) with:
- Patient’s Full first and last name AND
- Personal Health Number (PHN) or other unique identifier
- Sample site/source
- Date and time the specimen was collected

Sample transport:
- Do not refrigerate samples after collection
- Never transport syringes with needles to the laboratory
- Fluid samples (exception CSF) for anaerobic culture are considered priority samples and must be received in the laboratory within 2 hours of collection
- CSF samples are considered STAT and must be transported to the laboratory immediately
- Organisms will remain viable in the anaerobic transport media for up to 48 hours

Samples that are not labelled correctly and do not have a completed requisition will not be tested.

Questions? Call the Laboratory Information Center at 403-770-3600