

To: All Greater Peoria Service Area Carle Health Facilities and Patient Care Teams
Carle Health Methodist Outreach Clients

From: Carle Health: Peoria Service Area Laboratories

Date: October 27, 2025

Subject: INFORM: Proper Collection Procedures for Microbiology

INFORMATION:

The Microbiology Laboratory at Carle Health Peoria has noticed an increase in improperly labeled specimens for aerobic/anaerobic cultures as well as improperly collected (based off timing) blood cultures. This memo will serve as a guide for collection procedures across specimen sites and sources.

Table 1: General Guidelines for Specimen Labeling

SOURCE	SPECIMEN	SITE	
Tissue	Surgery, physical tissue	Specific location	
Fluid	Sterile container from sterile site	Joint/Synovial Pleural Ascites Peritoneal	Pericardial CSF shunt JP fluid
SWAB	ESWAB	Specific location	
BONE	Surgery, physical bone	Specific location	
Aspirate	Aspirates/fluid not from sterile body fluid sites	Specific location	

Key Points:

- Source label is what gets physically sent to the Microbiology Department. **I.e. SWAB**
- Site Label is where the specimen was physically taken from during procedure. **I.e. Left Lower Leg**
- Pertaining to Blood Culture Collection:
 - Frequency of Blood Cultures
 - A total of four (4) blood culture bottles (2 complete sets) are recommended in the first 48hrs of suspected sepsis
 - Exception: In cases of acute endocarditis 3 complete sets are recommended. Please **INDICATE** in order that this is a case of suspected endocarditis
 - Two (2) additional blood culture bottles (1 complete set) are accepted every 48hrs following the initial 4 blood culture bottles (2 sets) as condition warrants
 - Exception: Patients with suspected/confirmed endocarditis. Repeat of full blood culture set is recommended every 24 – 48hrs.
 - “Test of Cure” Cultures may be drawn 48hrs after the time a culture becomes positive.

In Depth Guidelines:

- If a specimen is collected and sent on an ESWAB, the source **MUST** be swab
 - Source CANNOT be Tissue, Fluid, Aspirate
- Do not transfer tissue, bone, or any other physical specimen into an ESWAB. These should be collected in a sterile container without any additives.
- Fluid is **ONLY** used for the following sites: Joint/Synovial, Pleural, Ascites, Peritoneal, Pericardial, CSF shunt, JP fluid
 - If your specimen does not fit in these categories, and is still a fluid, please send it in a sterile container and use source Aspirate. (i.e. abscess, drainage, non-sterile sites)
- Please notify the lab prior to sending a specimen if you are concerned about a potential Francisella or Brucella infection.
- Refer to **Laboratory Test Directory West Region** for further information specimen ordering and collection

CLOSING:

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter as proper specimen labeling significantly impacts workup procedures and ultimately patient care. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Microbiology Technical Coordinator and/or the Microbiology Section Director.

Questions: If there are any questions regarding this change, please contact:

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