

Basic Concepts for Micro Specimen Collection

1. Universal precaution guidelines must be followed for collection and transport of all specimens. Specimens should be placed in tightly sealed containers; the containers should be free of any external spillage, and the specimens should be transported in bags.
2. Collect the specimen from the actual site of infection, avoiding contamination from adjacent tissues or secretions.
3. Collect the specimen at optimal times (i.e. early morning sputum for AFB culture).
4. Collect a sufficient quantity of material.
5. Use appropriate collection devices: sterile, leak proof specimen containers. Use appropriate transport media. (Anaerobe transport system Amies or Stuart's for bacterial cultures, Cary-Blair for stool culture, M4 for viral and chlamydia cultures.)
6. Whenever possible, collect specimens prior to administration of antibiotics or anti-virals.
7. Properly label the specimen including the date, time, and initials of collector. The source of specimen is required.
8. Minimize transport time. Maintain an appropriate environment between collection of specimens and delivery to the Laboratory.
9. If appropriate, decontaminate the skin surface. Use 70-95% alcohol (ALC) and 1-2% tincture of iodine (TIO) or chloroprep containing chlorhexidine gluconate 2% and isopropyl alcohol 70% to prepare the site. Allow a contact time of two minutes to maximize the antiseptic effect.