

JOB AID: HOW TO COLLECT A FECAL SPECIMEN AND TRANSFER TO TRANSPORT MEDIUM

This provides guidance on how to collect a fecal specimen and transfer to transport medium for diagnosis of acute bacterial diarrheal disease. Specimens that cannot be cultured within 2 hours of collection should be placed in Cary-Blair transport medium and refrigerated immediately.

Supplies needed:

- One tube of Cary Blair transport medium
- Sterile cotton-tipped applicators (swabs)
- Gloves
- Permanent marker
- Specimen labels or adhesive tape

- 1** Chill the tube of Cary Blair transport medium by placing it on ice packs or in the refrigerator 1 - 2 hours before collecting the specimen.
- 2** Gloves should be worn at all times when collecting and handling the specimen.
- 3** Collect stool from patients in a clean (no disinfectant or detergent residue) container with a tight-fitting, leak-proof lid. Note: Specimens should not be collected from bedpans, as they may contain residual disinfectant or other contaminants.
- 4** Remove the wrapper from the handle end of the sterile swab. Do not touch the tip of the swab.
- 5** Collect a small amount of stool by inserting a sterile cotton- or polyester-tipped swab into the stool and rotating it. Mucus and shreds of intestinal epithelium if present, should be sampled with the swab.
- 6** Immediately insert the swab into transport medium. The swab should be pushed completely to the bottom of the tube of transport medium.
- 7** Break off the top portion of the stick that was in contact with the gloved fingers.
- 8** Repeat steps 5-7 for an additional sterile swab. Place the second swab in the SAME tube of Cary-Blair. Twist cap tight on Cary-Blair tube and specimen cup to prevent leakage.
- 9** Adhere specimen label to the container or write on adhesive tape and secure to tube.
- 10** Safely dispose all contaminated materials. Do not reuse.

