

Which Container?

When sending a specimen to Microbiology it is important to get the correct sample container

1. Sterile boric acid urine container



Please fill to the line. If there is an issue with this a minimum volume of 10 mls will be accepted. If less than this, please use the white topped container shown below.

2. Sterile universal container



This container is used for sending urine, pus, tissue or sputum that is required for culture of bacteria, and testing for some viruses. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

3. Faecal container



This container is used for sending faeces that is required for culture of bacteria, and testing of some toxins (C. difficile) and viruses (eg Norovirus). It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. Please only request Norovirus specifically where it is likely in the context of an in-patient outbreak.

4. Liquid swab for bacterial culture



This container is used now for all bacterial culture swabs. Viral and chlamydia detection require different swabs. Swabs are useful for sampling dry sites, or very small volumes of pus less than 1ml. If there is more pus available it is better to put the pus in a sterile universal container above. When taking the liquid swab it MUST not be moistened before use and if there is no liquid in the container it cannot be processed. The liquid is what is used for culture. It MUST be labelled with patient details and the site of the swab and accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen.

5. Viral swab container



This container is used for samples for detection of viruses. Nose and throat swabs/NPAs/ bronchoscopy samples and swabs from vesicles (non-genital HSV and varicella) can be sent for virus detection by PCR. It must be labelled with patient details and where the sample is from. It MUST accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. It must be clear on the request which viruses are expected. (For example: Influenza?) Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

6. Chlamydia transport container



This container is used to transport either an eye swab, self-taken low vulvo-vaginal swab, an endocervical swab or a urine sample (filled to a level between the arrows marked on the container) for testing for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and *Chlamydia trachomatis*. We test by PCR to detect the presence of DNA. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

7. HSV genital swab container



Very few departments are likely to need to send us samples for genital HSV testing but this is the container specifically for this test. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

8. Serum sample container



If blood tests are required to look for antibiotic levels, or antibody tests then this blood bottle is likely to be the best one. The bottle allows the blood to clot and the serum can then be separated for processing. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. It is particularly important to be specific about the test required as there are many different tests on serum. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

9. Whole blood sample container



This sample container contains EDTA which prevents the blood sample from clotting. This is particularly important for some quantitative viral load tests such as Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV where plasma rather than serum is required. Quantitative viral loads will only be requested by specialist consultants and even then only when the serum tests have already confirmed the presence of antibodies or antigens to the virus. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. It is important to be specific about the test required as there are different tests on plasma. Clinical details supplied will help to decide how best to process the specimen. If no details are supplied the wrong tests may be performed.

10. Blood culture bottles



These specialist bottles are required for culturing for bacteria in the blood. Bacteria will only be found in the bloodstream of acutely unwell patients so they should only be taken when a patient has a fever $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$ and preferably it should be taken by a phlebotomist. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details MUST be supplied to ensure that the lab is aware of specific patient risk factors for infection.

11. Mycobacterial blood culture bottle



Specialist request ONLY. In the immunocompromised (such as HIV) or patients who have endocarditis secondary to cardiothoracic surgery it may be necessary to culture peripheral blood for non-tuberculous mycobacteria. This should only be done after specific specialist advice and discussion with the duty microbiologist. The bottle needs to be specially sourced from the laboratory. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details MUST be supplied to ensure that the lab is aware of specific patient risk factors for infection.

12. Early morning urine container for renal TB



Specialist request ONLY. A specialist may request the collection of a larger volume (60mls) early morning urine (NOT a mid-stream specimen). This is centrifuged to find deposit to be cultured for renal tract tuberculosis. Three early morning urines are sent on consecutive days to attempt to exclude TB. Culture takes up to 6 weeks. The bottle needs to be specially sourced from the laboratory. It MUST be labelled with the patient details and say what it is a sample of and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. Clinical details MUST be supplied to ensure that the lab is aware of specific patient risk factors for infection.

13. TB T-spot container



Specialist request ONLY. Please send 2 lithium heparin tubes. They MUST be labelled with the patient details and MUST be accompanied by a fully completed request form (preferably e-request) stating who took the sample and contact details if there is a problem. This test must be agreed with the laboratory first and must arrive on the agreed day before 12.30pm to allow transit to the testing laboratory the same day.