

Fairview Health Services
Department Laboratory /Nursing
Section Acute Care: Collection
Category Provision of Care

Subject **THROAT CULTURE**

Purpose Provide instructions for consistent throat culture collection to ensure identification of organism responsible for pathology.

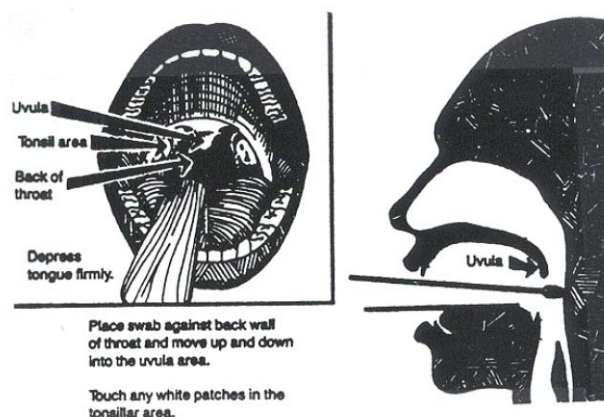
Policy Pharyngeal specimens may be cultured for the identification of Group A beta hemolytic streptococci (*Streptococcus pyogenes*), *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Corynebacterium diphtheria*, *Arcanobacterium* or respiratory viruses as requested by the physician.

Procedure Considerations

1. Immobilize arms and head of infants and children less than 3 years of age to avoid contamination of culture. The mummy restraint is the most effective method.
2. Use sterile synthetic fiber type swab. Cotton-tipped swabs should not be used, as toxic substances in cotton swabs may kill some bacteria.
3. When possible, collect specimen before initiation of antibiotic therapy or use of antihistamines. Antibiotics may suppress growth of infecting agent, causing false negative culture. Antihistamines may cause a beta-hemolytic colony to appear as an alpha-hemolytic on blood agar plate.

Culture

1. Follow blood collection standards for test order. Follow Patient Identification and Laboratory Specimen Labeling procedure.
2. Position the patient so the oral cavity is well lighted.
3. Instruct patient to breathe deeply and depress tongue with tongue blade.
4. Guide the swab to the posterior pharynx, taking care not to touch tongue, cheeks, and uvula. Swab vigorously while the patient says "Ah." (This lifts the uvula and decreases the gag reflex.) Swab area from right tonsillar area across posterior pharynx to left tonsillar area and across to right tonsillar area; in addition, areas of inflammation, ulceration, exudation, or with white patches should be touched. Rub vigorously, not gently, to remove organisms adhering to the mucosal membrane



5. Remove swab; do not touch tongue, uvula, or cheeks.
6. Prepare culture as ordered for appropriate organism:
 - Group A Strep Culture: Collect two throat swabs. Place each swab in culture container. Label container and place in specimen transport bag.
 - *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* Culture: Use larger swab applied to any area of inflammation and especially an area with a membrane. Apply swabs to surface of Loeffler's agar slant tube. Break off or bend swab, leaving tip on media when tube is closed. Label tube and place in specimen transport bag.
 - *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* Culture: Roll swab directly on Thayer-Martin medium in "Z" pattern. Label plate and place in CO2 transport bag.
 - Respiratory viruses: Collect two throat swabs. Place each swab in culture container. Label swab and place in specimen transport bag.
7. Deliver to the laboratory within one hour of collection.

- Equipment/Supplies
- Tongue blade
 - Flashlight or other adequate light source
 - Appropriate collection container (also see Lab Guide): Group A Strep and *Arcanobacterium dual* (2) liquid Stuarts swabs, Thayer-Martin medium for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* culture (available from Microbiology Lab), or Loeffler's agar slant tube for *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* culture (available from Microbiology Lab).

References Excel Physicians Office Laboratory Technical Policies and Procedures, 38-39.

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