

Anaerobic Specimen Collection

Use of proper collection techniques, appropriate transport media and rapid transportation of the specimens to the laboratory are critical for anaerobic culture success. Regular culturette/swabs and transport systems will not preserve anaerobic bacteria, yielding poor results or no growth. Best results are obtained from fluid and tissue, but swabs are acceptable as long as collected as described below. Swabs must be submitted in anaerobic transport media (ATM) but this special media is also recommended for small tissue or low volume fluid samples. The specimen should be maintained at room temperature and transported to the laboratory as soon as possible.

Culture of liquid or purulent samples:

1. Fluid must be submitted in ATM such as a Port-A-Cul™ tube/vial, sterile cup or vacuum tube.
2. Collect specimen from deep within the wound with a sterile syringe and needle. If possible, the skin should be disinfected before needle puncture. Any entrapped air should be expelled.
3. Inject up to 5 ml of fluid into the transport media through the rubber port of a Port-A-Cul™ tube or plain red top vacuum tube. If greater than 5 ml of fluid is obtained, place the entire volume (up to 50 ml) in a sterile screw-cap specimen cup.

Collection of tissue:

1. If a tissue is small enough to fit inside the ATM tube, simply uncap the tube and while holding the tube upright, drop the tissue on the agar surface and replace the tube cap. Tissue can also be placed in a plain red top vacuum tube.
2. If a tissue is too large to fit into the ATM, place it on a piece of sterile gauze moistened with physiologic saline inside a sterile screw cap collection cup or whirl-pak.

Collection by Swab:

1. Swabs should only be used when tissue or liquid samples are not available.
2. Obtain a sample using aseptic technique to avoid superficial contaminants. It may be necessary to separate the sound margins or make a small lance in a closed abscess before extending the tip of the swab deeply into the wound. Take care not to touch the adjacent skin margins.
3. Remove the tube cap from a Port-A-Cul™ tube while holding the tube upright.
4. Place the swab into the tube media and break it off.
5. Do not place more than one swab in each tube and do not remove the media from the tube.

Anaerobic transport systems:

Cary-Blair Media, e.g. BBL™ Port-A-Cul™ tube/vial, Anaerobic Systems ATM, or StarSwab® Anaerobic Transport.