



Hygienic Laboratory

The University of Iowa

Enteric (Stool) Culture / Norovirus Testing

Specimen Collection and Shipping Instructions

Submission Requirements

- Collect stool in a vial of Enteric Transport Media (ETM). **ONE VIAL IS ACCEPTABLE FOR BOTH TESTS.**
- Raw stool in a leak-proof container will also be accepted **for Norovirus only.**
- For patients unable to produce a stool specimen, rectal swabs will also be accepted **for culture only** but not for Norovirus testing. Two swabs must be inserted into the transport media. Rectal swabs may produce less accurate results.
- Label vial with patient's name or unique identifier and the date of collection.
- **UNLABELED SPECIMENS WILL NOT BE TESTED.**
- A completed Bacteriology Test Request Form must accompany specimen.

Specimen Collection and Handling

- The patient should be instructed not to take any antacids, oily laxatives, or anti-diarrheal medications unless prescribed by the physician.
- Pass the stool into a clean, dry, plastic disposable container (e.g., margarine, cottage cheese, etc.) or place a large plastic bag or kitchen wrap over the toilet seat to catch the specimen.
- **DO NOT MIX URINE OR WATER WITH THE STOOL SPECIMEN.**
- Formed or semi-formed stool: Use the spork provided in the cap of the vial to pick a portion of the stool equivalent to the size of a navy bean and MIX it into transport media in the vial. Any blood or mucous should be included.
- Liquid stool: Add approximately ½ to 1 teaspoon of fluid to the bottle and MIX into the transport media. **DO NOT** let the specimen sit on top of the media.
- Rectal swabs: Insert the swabs into the transport media and break or cut the sticks so that the vial cap may be securely closed.
- Tighten cap completely. A leaking specimen may be unsuitable for testing.
- Clean the outside of the vial with rubbing alcohol or soap and water if it is soiled. Check to make sure the patient name and date of collection are still readable.
- Wrap specimen container in absorbent material, and place it into a biohazard bag.
- Place bottle in the biohazard bag.
- Wash hands thoroughly.
- **For Norovirus testing:** If raw stool is submitted, the specimen must be stored in the refrigerator and shipped on freezer packs in a Styrofoam container. If stool is collected in ETM, then the specimen does not require cold shipment or storage, but temperature extremes must be avoided.

Complete Test Request Form

- A Bacteriology Test Request Form must be filled out completely. Testing is dependent upon this information; therefore, results may be delayed if information is not provided.

Shipping Instructions

- Include completed Bacteriology Test Request Form in side pocket of biohazard bag.
- Place all materials in Styrofoam container, and place in a mailer.
- ETM and rectal swabs: Ship at room temperature as soon as possible via first class mail.
- **For Norovirus testing:** If submitting raw stool, ship it in leak-proof container that has been packaged as described above. Ship it in a Styrofoam container with a freezer pack. **DO NOT USE WET ICE.**
- Ship multiple specimens in packaging compliant with USPS or IATA regulations.

Contact Information

- For test request forms and kits: 319/335-4466
- For additional forms, go to <http://www.uhl.uiowa.edu/kitsquotesforms>
- For Enteric questions: 319/335-4335

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