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.