

### Specimen Collection

All specimens are a potential infection risk. Therefore, all specimens must be collected using standard precautions. Specimens should be transported in a sealed rigid container.

Taking routine specimens should be avoided to help reduce inappropriate prescribing of antibiotic treatment. Specimens should only be taken if there are signs of a clinical infection (see table below).

#### Specimen collection and storage

- Wash hands before and after specimen collection.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Specimens must be labelled correctly, including relevant clinical details and recent antibiotic history.
- Wherever possible, obtain a fresh specimen. Specimens should be sent in the correct container as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

Specimen	Indication	Container and Storage
<b>Wound swab</b>	Swelling, redness, heat, yellow or green discharge, increased discharge of fluid, wound deterioration, fever	Sterile cotton swab in transport medium. Charcoal medium increases survival of bacteria during transportation. Store at room temperature.
<b>Sputum</b>	Productive cough, (green/yellow) or presence of blood in sputum	Plain universal container. Store at room temperature.
<b>Urine</b>	Pain in passing urine, increase in frequency, blood, fever, unusual incontinence	Universal container with boric acid (red top) which prevent bacteria from multiplying in the container. Refrigerate.
<b>Faeces (stools)</b>	Diarrhoea, increase in frequency, presence of blood, abdominal pain	Stool specimen container. Store at room temperature.

## Test your knowledge

*Please tick the correct answer*

	True	False
1. Taking routine specimens should be avoided.		
2. Specimens should only be taken if there are signs of clinical infection.		

## Remember:

- Wash hands before and after specimen collection.
- Specimens must be labelled correctly, including relevant clinical details and any recent antibiotic history.

## Factsheet Activity *Please tick appropriate box when activity has been completed*

Check that colleagues include details of any recent antibiotic history on specimen request forms.	
Check that you have an adequate supply of specimen containers available.	