

Multiple Microbiology reports on Stool samples from RIE Microbiology laboratory.

PLIG has requested the Microbiology Laboratories issue a guidance note to explain the different test that we do and their turnaround times.

The problem is we issue separate reports on each test done on a stool sample. The reports in our current system do not mention that there are further reports to follow. We will try to fix this in the next laboratory computer system.

We are aware of patients being told that their stool sample is negative before the Campylobacter result comes back. We would also like to remind you that although Microbiology phones many of the positive results we do not phone Campylobacter positives.

Detailed explanation

Almost all stool samples sent to microbiology for culture get two tests done

1. A test for Clostridium difficile toxin- Turnaround time 4 days. This test is usually reported back before the culture results.
2. Culture for Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter and E coli O157. The culture investigation also includes microscopy for cryptosporidium- Turnaround time 5 days.

If the clinical details suggest possible E coli O157 infection such as bloody diarrhoea or contact with a case or the sample is bloody diarrhoea on receipt then:

3. If culture negative we will send the stool for PCR for Shiga toxigenic E Coli- turnaround time 3 days for a negative. We usually put a comment on the culture report that this test has been added.

If parasitology has been requested at RIE we may do two tests

1. Routinely the new PCR test for Giardia lamblia, Cryptosporidium spp, and Entamoeba histolytica – Turnaround time 5 days.
2. If clinically indicated we will add microscopy for parasites- Turnaround time 8 days. If we are doing microscopy we intend to put a comment on the PCR result that there is a microscopy result to follow.

At SJH the parasitology results are reported on the same report as the culture results with the same turnaround time of 5 days.

Key messages about stool samples for Microbiology :

1. The *C. difficile* toxin result is not the final report on a sample.
2. Positive *Campylobacter* results are not phoned.
3. From receipt in the laboratory it takes 5 working days to get negative results for a stool sample sent for microbiology culture. If the laboratory sends it on for PCR for Shiga toxinigenic *E. coli* this may take another 3 days.
4. At RIE it can take 8 working days to get all the negative test results for a parasitology request. At SJH parasitology is reported on the culture report within 5 working days.
5. It may take another day on top of these targets to get results through the laboratory reporting and GP systems to be available to the patient.
6. Please inform patients that results can take ten working days (two weeks), from submission of sample, for negative results to come back for culture and parasitology. See diagram below.

