

25th August 2016

Clinical Microbiology

Change in Advice on Microbiology swabs

Please run down your existing stocks of in date bacteriology swabs by using either black top (charcoal) or blue top (clear transport swabs) for any bacteriology culture in primary care.

Please don't order large stocks of the current swabs.

We have discovered that practices have large stocks of three types of swabs:

- Charcoal swabs (Black top) where the previous advice was that these are only ideal for hospital endocervical swabs.
- Amies/ Stuarts (Blue top clear transport medium) for all other bacteriology samples.
- Swabs with no transport medium – dry swabs.

DRY SWABS should not be used for microbiology investigations. They probably have no use at all in General Practice now that virology transport media packs come with their own swabs. You may wish to get rid of dry swabs to avoid confusion.

The black charcoal swabs can in fact be used for all bacteriology samples

We are going to be changing swab type within the next year as part of new technology coming into the Microbiology lab. We would be grateful if you could please run down your existing stocks of swabs by using in date charcoal or blue top clear transport swabs for any bacteriology culture in primary care. Please do not order large stocks of the current swabs for this reason.

There is no change to specimen containers for virology and chlamydia /gonococcal testing

SUMMARY

- Blue topped clear swabs or charcoal (black) swabs can be used interchangeably for any bacterial investigation in primary care
- BIN your dry swabs – they are now redundant.
- Please run down current stocks and avoid big orders of new swabs as we are anticipating a move to a new system.

We will issue guidance on the new swabs nearer the time of introduction.

With many thanks for your co-operation.

Kind regards,

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<http://www.edinburghlabmed.co.uk/PLIG/Microbiology/Pages/default.aspx>

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