GENITAL TRACT SPECIMEN COLLECTION

Genital tract specimens may be submitted for culture primarily for the isolation of sexually transmitted pathogens (such as *N. gonorrhoeae*, *Chlamydia trachomatis*, Group B streptococci, *Herpes simplex*, and *Candida* infections). The suspected pathogen determines the specific type of culture to order. Culture is not recommended for detection of *Gardnerella vaginalis*. Detection of *Gardnerella vaginalis* can be determined by Bacterial Vaginosis Stain (LAB1038) at St Louis or Gram Stain (LAB250) at Washington.

For Pace DNA Probe Collection refer to specific DNA Probe.

**Materials Needed**
- Sterile swab transport system
- Mini-tip Culturette (for urethral specimens)
- Sterile specimen container

**Collection**

**Cervix**
1. Do not use lubricant during procedure.
2. Wipe the cervix clean of vaginal secretion and mucus.
3. Rotate a sterile swab and obtain exudate from the endocervical glands.
4. If no exudate is seen, insert a sterile swab into the endocervical canal and rotate the swab.

**Urethra**
1. Collect specimens 2 hours or more after patient has urinated.
2. Insert a thin urethrogenital (mini-tip) swab 2 to 4 cm into the endourethra, gently rotate it, leave it in place for 1 to 2 seconds and withdraw it.

**Vagina**
1. Use a speculum without lubricant.
2. Collect secretions from the mucosa in the vaginal canal with sterile swab.

**Vulva or External Penile Lesion** (HSV Cultures usually)
1. Clean the surface of the lesion with 0.85% NaCl. If there is a crust on the lesion, remove it.
2. Scrape the lesion until serous fluid emerges.
3. Wipe away fluid and debris with sterile gauze. (Try to avoid bleeding.)
4. Press the base of lesion until clear fluid is expressed.
5. Collect the fluid with a sterile swab for cultures.

**Specimen transport**
All specimens should be delivered to the laboratory as soon as possible. Specimens for *N. gonorrhoeae* should be plated within 12 hours of collection. From outpatient locations, specimens for *Chlamydia trachomatis* or for Viral Culture should be submitted in M4 or UTM Viral Transport Media.

**Specimen Labeling** Refer to the Specimen Collection Procedures for Labeling Specimens.