

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIMEN COLLECTION - SUSPECTED CHOLERA

- Stool is the preferred specimen. A rectal swab can be collected if stool collection is not feasible.
- On the specimen submission form, clearly request 'MCS & cholera' testing. Testing for cholera is not included in routine 'MCS' – it must be specifically requested. Include clinical history of the patient on the relevant field.
- Transport to the laboratory as soon as possible.

	If a delay of >2 hours before processing is likely, place the stool specimen in Cary-Blair transport medium as described in the steps below. If possible, the transport medium should have been chilled for 1 to 2 hours beforehand.
	1. Collect a small amount of stool by inserting a sterile cotton-tipped swab into the stool specimen and rotating it 2. If mucous and shreds of intestinal epithelium are present, these should be sampled with the swab.
	3. Immediately insert the swab into the transport medium. 4. The swab should be pushed completely to the bottom of the transport medium bottle.
	5. Break off and discard the top portion of the swab-stick that is protruding above the edge of the bottle, leaving the cotton tip in the transport medium.
	6. Replace the screw cap on the specimen container and transport medium bottle and tighten firmly. 7. Place both into the plastic specimen bag and seal. 8. Complete the specimen request form and place in the sleeve of the plastic specimen bag. Include all the required patient details, clinical presentation and history, and the name and contact details of the attending healthcare practitioner, and type of specimen (i.e. stool or rectal swab). Specifically request MC&S and cholera testing. 9. If there is a delay in transport (or processing in the laboratory) immediately place both containers in a refrigerator (at 4°C) or cooler box (with ice bricks) until collected by the courier. DO NOT FREEZE.

Collection of rectal swabs:

1. Moisten the swab in sterile transport medium (Cary-Blair).
2. Insert swab gently into the rectal sphincter (2 to 3cm) and rotate. Remove swab and check for visible faecal matter.
3. Immediately insert the swab into the transport medium (see steps above), label the specimen, and deliver to laboratory promptly.
4. If there is a delay in transport (or processing in the laboratory) immediately place both containers in a refrigerator (at 4°C) or cooler box (with ice bricks) until collected by the courier. **DO NOT FREEZE.**

Should you have any questions, you may contact the NICD 24-hour hotline (for use by health professionals only): 0800 212 552.

For laboratory-related queries, please contact Mimmy Ngomane (mimmyn@nicd.ac.za; (011) 386 6235; 072 407 4667) or Dr Keeren Lutchminarain (keerenl@nicd.ac.za; 011 555 0439).