

Microbiology User Information: Dermatological specimens for superficial mycoses

Specimen Types:

Hair, Skin, Nails

Indications for Laboratory Samples for Mycology Testing:

West Kent Formulary: Fungal skin infections [Fungal skin infections \(formularywkccgmtw.co.uk\)](http://formularywkccgmtw.co.uk)

Primary Care Antimicrobial guidelines: [Antimicrobial Guidelines \(formularywkccgmtw.co.uk\)](http://formularywkccgmtw.co.uk)

Request form requirements:

Providing adequate clinical details to microbiology request forms is vital for the safety of laboratory staff and ensuring patient tests are correctly interpreted. Please include details of relevant clinical information, current, just finished or intended antifungal therapy.

If suspected patient has Blastomyces dermatitidis, Coccidioides immitis, Histoplasma capsulatum, Paracoccidioides brasiliensis, Cladophialophora bantiana (formerly Xylohypha bantiana or Cladophialophora bantianum) or Penicillium marneffeii please record on request and send as high risk.

Time to laboratory:

Collect specimens before antifungal therapy where possible

Specimens should be kept at room temperature and transported and processed as soon as possible although, provided the samples are kept dry, the fungus will remain viable for several months.

Samples should be allowed to dry out and kept at room temperature

For information on transport, including days and times, please see [Pathology Transport Services](#)

Laboratory Testing:

All Microbiology laboratory investigations are based on UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations which can be found [HERE](#). If further advice is required, please contact the laboratory.

Laboratory Turn Around Time (from Date/Time of Receipt in Laboratory):

Microscopy: within 4 days.

Culture results: may take up to four weeks

Time limit for requesting additional investigations:

7 days



Requests for extra tests must be received within the sample storage period and must be accompanied by a request form. Please telephone the laboratory before requesting extra tests to ensure the sample is available and still viable

Adverse factors affecting the interpretation of microscopy and culture results:

- Contamination of the sample at the point of collection
- Insufficient sample volume may impede the recovery of organisms

Note: rapid transport to the laboratory is the best way to minimise uncertainty of results

Specimen Collection:

| | |
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| Collection pack | <p>Dermapak Specimen Envelope:</p>  <p>Sterile white top 30ml 'Universal' can also be used</p>  |
| Specimen Type | Skin scrapings, hair or nails from patients with suspected fungal infections |
| Collection Methods | <p>Care should be taken if using a sharp scalpel blade or scissors to collect samples</p> <p>Numbers and frequency of specimen collection are dependent on clinical condition of patient. The minimum amount that is acceptable should be enough to cover a five pence piece. Scrapings should be plentiful and representative. Hair should be plentiful and representative. Nail clippings should be plentiful and representative of infected nail.</p> <p>Skin</p> <p>Patients' skin and nails can be swabbed with 70% alcohol prior to collection of the specimen, this is especially important if creams, lotions or powders have been applied. The edges of skin lesions yield the greatest quantities of viable fungus. Lesions should be scraped with a blunt scalpel blade and collected into a Dermapak container</p> <p>Nail</p> <p>Clippings should be taken from any discoloured, dystrophic or brittle parts of the nail. When there is superficial involvement (as in white superficial onychomycosis) nail scrapings may be taken with a curette. If associated skin lesions are present samples from these are likely to be infected with the same organism and are more likely to give a positive culture. Nails should be collected in a plastic 'Universal' container</p> <p>Hair</p> <p>Samples from the scalp should include skin scales and hair stumps. Cut hairs are not suitable for direct examination as the infected area is usually close to the scalp surface. Scraping for direct examination is the preferable sample collection method, however plastic hairbrushes, scalp massage pads, swabs or plastic toothbrushes may be used to sample scalps for culture where there is little obvious scaling. Hairs can be sent in a Dermapak ® collection pack.</p> |