

LABORATORY COLLECTION MANUAL	CEREBRAL SPINAL FLUID (CSF) SPECIMEN COLLECTION
Effective Date: 6/96	Page 1 of 2

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLE

CSF cultures are performed to confirm a diagnosis of meningitis. Identification of the causative organism is one of the most important functions of the microbiology laboratory due to the serious nature of acute meningitis.

II. SPECIMEN COLLECTION

- A. Obtain a lumbar puncture tray from central supply.
- B. Physician must complete CSF form attached to the tray. This serves as the requisition for the tests, which will be entered into the computer by Laboratory staff. Please send a copy of the completed form with specimen to the lab. Original form is placed on the patient's chart.
- C. **“Time Out” must be performed prior to procedure.** CSF is collected by a physician under aseptic conditions.
 1. After the puncture, slowly drain the CSF fluid into the sterile leak proof tubes. Three tubes are generally required for microbiology, hematology, and chemistry. As a rule, the first tube is reserved for additional non-routine testing. The second tube should be labeled for chemistry, the third for microbiology, and the fourth for hematology. **Exception: Always send the most turbid tube to microbiology.**
 2. Use extreme care in the collection of fluid. Do not contaminate, as any isolate from CSF is considered significant.
 3. Submit sufficient volume for tests requested. Do not overfill tubes, as it creates an aerosol upon opening.
 4. Suggested volumes are:
 - 00000000• 1 ml for bacterial culture
 - 2 ml for fungal culture
 - 2 ml for acid fast bacilli culture

III. TRANSPORT

- A. Handle a CSF specimen as a STAT. Transport to the laboratory immediately and verbally alert a member of the staff.
- B. **Do not refrigerate CSF, unless viral studies alone are requested.**
- C. As always, transport specimens to the lab in a biohazard bag.

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See original policy in the Laboratory for all documented annual reviews.

REFERENCES:

Clinical Microbiology Procedures Handbook; 1992; Isenberg; American Society for Microbiology.

Laboratory Test Handbook; 1994, 3rd edition; Jacobs, et al; Lexi-Comp Inc.