

PROCEDURE

ORIGINAL DATE: 09/02

REVISED DATE: 02/08

SUBJECT: SWAB CULTURE FROM A WOUND, OBTAINING A

PURPOSE: To describe the process used by clinicians to obtain an exudate sample for culture from a wound.

Considerations

All wounds, particularly chronic wounds, are contaminated. Contamination does not cause a problem with wound healing; however infection impedes the healing process. In addition, infection may result in complications such as osteomyelitis, abscess formation, or sepsis. If a wound infection is suspected, an order from the physician for a culture should be obtained. If the physician orders a swab culture, the home care clinician may perform this procedure. If the physician orders a biopsy or needle aspiration, referral to a specialist is indicated.

<i>Necessary Equipment</i>	
Gloves	Dressing and wound cleansing supplies as ordered by the physician
Culturette	Specimen Label
Lab Slip	

Procedure for Swab Culture of a Wound

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
1. Wash hands and apply gloves before performing wound care procedure/assessment.	To provide clean environment for wound care.
2. Explain procedure to patient.	To reduce anxiety.
3. Position the patient comfortably, allowing easy access to the wound.	To reduce anxiety/discomfort.
4. Remove and discard old dressing according to HHF Policy #1931 – “ <i>Hazardous Materials and Waste, Handling and Disposal of</i> ”. Remove gloves, wash hands, apply new gloves and don appropriate PPE.	To provide clean environment for wound care.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
5. For sutured wounds: carefully cleanse the incision and periwound tissue. Remove the swab from the specimen collector being careful to touch only the top of the cap. Gently express exudate from the incision, place the swab culturette in exudate without touching the surrounding skin. Return swab to specimen collector.	To isolate contaminants/infectious agents in wound.
6. For non-sutured wounds: carefully cleanse the wound and periwound. Dry the periwound tissue. Remove the swab from the specimen collector being careful to touch only the top of the cap. Press the swab against the wound bed in the deepest, cleanest part of the wound, avoiding devitalized tissue when possible. Use sufficient pressure to produce fresh exudates from the tissues. Avoid touching the surrounding skin. Return swab to specimen collector.	To isolate contaminants/infectious agents in wound.
7. Proceed with dressing application based on assessment and physician order.	To cover and protect wound.
8. Discard all disposable materials according to HHF policy.	
9. Remove gloves and wash hands.	To prevent cross-contamination.
10. Document the procedure and where the culture was taken in the “lab/test” section of the medical record. Update the plan of care as needed.	To communicate findings of the visit and actions taken.
11. Complete specimen label/lab slip.	
12. Follow HHF Policy #1021 – “ <i>Transport of Patient Specimens</i> ” for storage/delivery of specimen to the lab.	
13. Document the culture results in a call log in the patient’s chart.	