

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Stool specimens are usually collected to determine if a symptomatic patient has:
 - a. Occult blood
 - b. Bacterial infection, e.g. *C. difficile*
 - c. Viral infection, e.g. norovirus
 - d. Parasitic infection
2. Stool specimens are collected differently depending on the purpose of the specimen and the type of organism suspected:
 - a. The type of specimen ordered is based on the patient's symptoms
 - b. Call the laboratory to obtain specific information about how the specimen should be collected and transported
3. Occult Blood:
 - a. Multiple medications increase the risk of gastric bleeding
 - b. Occult bleeding can be a first warning sign of colon cancer
 - c. A diet high in red meats and green leafy vegetables can cause false positives in occult blood tests
4. *C. difficile* Infections:
 - a. Can affect home care patients who have been hospitalized or had a stay at a long-term care facility and/or have been treated with multiple antibiotics
 - b. Produce a toxin which causes watery diarrhea
 - c. Are considered a multiple drug resistant organism (MDRO)
 - d. Are spore-forming bacteria, which are not destroyed by hand cleansers
 - e. Hands must be washed with soap and water
 - f. Must be processed in the lab within two hours
5. Stool cultures:
 - a. Consider with patient/caregiver frequency of diarrhea stools and if patient can "catch" the specimen in the container, or needs a specimen hat, or other creative way of capturing a stool specimen without contaminating with non-stool contact
 - b. Explain to patient/caregiver that goal is to obtain a watery stool in the container, not contaminated by contact with urine, tissue paper, or skin
 - c. Explain that the inside of the container and the inside of the lid cannot be touched

EQUIPMENT:

Gloves (at least 2 pairs)
Toilet, commode, bed pan or specimen hat
Tissue paper
Soap and water
For Occult Blood:

Stool cup or other collection device

Kit for occult blood test

For Stool Culture:

Sterile Container

Paper towel

Soapy water/disposable washcloth

Antiseptic/disinfectant wipes

PROCEDURE:

1. Occult Blood:
 - a. Use two patient identifiers
 - b. Adhere to standard precautions and explain procedure to patient/caregiver
 - c. Instruct patient to void first if possible, and then to collect stools within the stool cup while defecating
 - d. Take stool cup from patient
 - e. Open occult blood slide packet
 - f. Using stick, obtain a small portion of stool and smear thinly on to first window of the slide packet following manufacturer's directions
 - g. Obtain a second stool smear from a different part of stool and apply thinly to second window
 - h. Cover the windows
 - i. Empty contents of stool cup into toilet
 - j. Put waste supplies in impervious container
 - k. Remove gloves and wash hands
 - l. Apply label to the slide packet
 - m. Either run test with test solution as per manufacturer's directions or bring the card to the lab
2. Stool Culture:
 - a. Adhere to standard precautions and explain procedure to patient/caregiver
 - b. Ask patient/caregiver to "catch" next watery stool:
 - i. Wash hands. Don gloves
 - ii. Open container carefully, without touching inside of container or lid
 - iii. Place container underneath anus during defecation, without touching skin
 - iv. Fill container with about 30 cc of watery stool
 - v. Screw lid onto specimen container
 - vi. Place container on paper towel
 - vii. Dispose of gloves
 - c. Complete bowel movement
 - d. Apply new gloves
 - e. Wipe container off with tissue
 - f. Clean outside of container with soapy water/disposable wash cloth and/or disinfectant wipes
 - g. Dispose of used supplies in impervious trash bag
 - h. Dispose of gloves. Wash hands

- i. Don new set of gloves
- j. Attach label to container, not lid
- k. Place container into biohazard specimen bag
- l. Place requisition into pocket of the specimen bag
- m. Secure the bag
- n. Remove gloves. Wash hands with soap and water
- o. Place the specimen bag in the transportation bag
- p. Bring specimen to lab immediately

AFTER CARE:

1. Document in patient record:
 - a. Date and time of specimen collection
 - b. Purpose of collection, test to be performed
 - c. Color and consistency of stool
 - d. Patient's response to procedure
 - e. Name of lab, date/time delivered

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