

Appendix J: Wound Swabbing Technique

Collecting swab specimens using Levine’s technique provides a reasonably accurate measure of wound bioburden (Gardner et al., 2006). **Obtain a wound culture when clinical signs and symptoms of infection are present.**

Technique:

- Use sterile cotton-tipped swab and culture medium in a pre-packaged collection and transport system. Community nurses should not allow transport medium to freeze or become overheated in the car before using it.
- Thoroughly rinse wound with normal saline (non-bacteriostatic).
- Do not swab pus, exudate, hard eschar or necrotic tissue.
- Rotate the swab tip in a 1cm² area of clean granulation tissue for a period of 5 seconds, using enough pressure to release tissue exudate. *This may be painful so warn the patient of the possibility of pain and pre-medicate with analgesia if possible.*
- Remove protective cap from culture medium and insert cotton-tipped applicator into the culture medium without contaminating the applicator.
- Transport to the laboratory at room temperature within 24 hours.

Note: In Ontario, the *Ontario Medical Laboratories Technologies Act, 1991* requires a health-care practitioner’s order to process the culture.

Note. From “Clinical Practice Policy and Procedure 16.2.3. Semi Quantitative Wound Swab Sample Culturing Technique,” by C. Harris and Care Partners/ET NOW, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

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