

**PURPOSE:** To define the responsibilities for obtaining nipple and breast milk cultures.

**RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Staff may obtain nipple and breast milk culture with a physician order.

**SUPPORTIVE DATA:**

1. Personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Wear gloves, and other PPE, for obtaining milk samples
  
2. Indications for obtaining culture
  - a. Acute mastitis
  - b. Mastitis not responsive to antibiotic regimen
  - c. Breast pain out of proportion to clinical findings
  - d. Nipple pain
  - e. Nipple fissures

**EQUIPMENT LIST:**

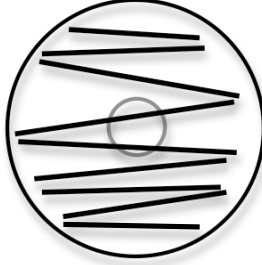
<p><b>All cultures</b>                  Towel to cover patient's lap                  Gloves                  Biohazard plastic lab transport bag</p>	<p><b>Nipple cleansing</b>                  Sterile saline for irrigation                  Sterile gauze                  Alcohol pads</p> <p><b>Milk cultures</b>                  2 sterile specimen cups - 1 for each breast</p> <p><b>Nipple cultures</b>                  2 culturette tube - 1 for each breast</p>
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Procedure steps	Key points
<p>Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Culture the nipple and /or expressed milk prior to initiation of antibiotics when infection is suspected</li> <li>- If the patient is not responding to antibiotics, cultures may be obtained to guide a change in therapy</li> </ul>	<p>The purpose of culturing expressed milk prior to starting antibiotics is to serve as a baseline for guiding treatment.</p>

**DOCUMENTATION**

1. Label culturettes or specimen cups with patient name, medical record number, and source:
  - a. Expressed milk, left or right breast
  - b. Nipple swab, left or right breast
  - c. Nipple wound swab, left or right breast.
2. Order cultures in Epic. For nipple cultures, source is skin swab. For milk cultures, source is breast milk (see below). In comments, note whether to combine samples or culture separately, as clinically indicated.
3. Deliver specimen to lab desk in OB clinic. If the lab desk is closed / after hours, tube specimens to the micro lab at 82 or deliver to micro lab drop-off window.

**Collecting a Nipple Culture**

<p><b><u>Nipple swab method</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Clean hands and apply gloves.</li> <li>2) Open culturette package.</li> <li>3) Moisten tip of culturette swab in the culture tube media.</li> <li>4) Perform a 10 point culture of the areola - rotate the swab in a zigzag pattern across the areola at 10 points.</li> <li>5) Avoid touching the swab to the surrounding skin on the breast.</li> <li>6) Place swab in culturette.</li> <li>7) Label culturette with patient label and left or right nipple.</li> <li>8) Repeat the same process for the contralateral breast.</li> <li>9) Place in lab biohazard transport bag.</li> </ol>	<p>DO NOT cleanse the nipple prior to obtaining swabs of intact skin.</p>  <p>Obtain separate samples for the left and right areola.</p>
<p><b><u>Fissure / Open wound culture</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Cleanse the nipple with saline.</li> <li>2) Clean hands and apply clean gloves.</li> <li>3) Open the culturette tube.</li> <li>4) If the wound is dry, moisten the tip of the culturette swab in the culture medium. If the wound is moist after cleaning, this may not be necessary.</li> <li>5) Rotate the end of the sterile synthetic tipped swab in the wound for 5 seconds.</li> <li>6) Place the swab in the culturette.</li> <li>7) Label culturette with patient label and left or right nipple.</li> <li>8) Place in lab biohazard transport bag.</li> </ol>	<p>Use this technique for open sores on the nipple.</p> <p>For cultures of open wounds, cleanse the nipple prior to obtaining a culture to reduce contamination with skin flora.</p>

**Collecting a Milk Culture**

<p><b><u>Cleansing the nipple</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Place a towel in the patient's lap prior to irrigation.</li> <li>2) Prior to milk expression, irrigate the nipple with sterile saline.</li> <li>3) Blot the nipple with sterile gauze after irrigation</li> <li><b>4) Cleanse each nipple with an alcohol wipe. Allow alcohol to dry.</b></li> <li>5) Remove gloves and clean hands.</li> <li>6) Apply clean gloves</li> </ol>	<p>Maintain aseptic environment with hand hygiene and wearing gloves</p> <p>Use hand sanitizer between gloving to prevent contamination</p>
<p><b><u>Milk expression</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ask the patient if she would prefer to manually express milk herself, or have the provider express the milk sample.</li> <li>2) The patient or provider should clean hands prior to milk expression and put on gloves.</li> <li>3) Position the dominant hand in a "c" shape, with the pads of the thumb and fingers about 1.5 inches behind the nipple.</li> <li>4) Push straight back into the chest wall.</li> <li>5) Roll thumb and fingers forward to express milk.</li> <li>6) Allow the first few drops to fall onto the towel.</li> <li>7) Express 5-10 cc of "mid-stream milk" into sterile cup.</li> <li>8) Label cup with patient label and left or right breast.</li> <li>9) Repeat on opposite side.</li> <li>10) Place in lab biohazard transport bag.</li> </ol>	<p>Some patients may not feel comfortable having a provider perform manual expression. Discuss this with the patient prior to beginning the milk culture process.</p> <div> <p>The image shows a pair of hands cupping a breast. The thumb and fingers are positioned behind the areola, forming a 'C' shape. The hands are shown in a light skin tone, and the breast is a realistic color.</p> </div> <p>Hand positioning for manual expression of milk.</p> <p>Obtain separate samples for the left and right breast. The micro lab will pool the samples to assure the same volume of sample from each breast.</p>

Epic Order for Aerobic Milk Culture

**Aerobic Culture** Accept Cancel Remove

Status: **Normal** Standing Future

Add-on: No add-on specimen found

Priority: Routine **Routine** STAT

Class: Clinic Collect Lab Collect **Clinic Collect** External

Specimen Type: Breast Milk Aspirate Drainage Surface Swab Punch/Skin Biopsy Renal Calculi

Specimen Src: Other-enter

Submitter:

Lab: Resulting Agency: UNC HEALTH CAF Collection Date:

Collection Time:

External Requisition Number

**Comments:**  Insert SmartText ← → ↶ ↷

**{LACT separate combine:22271}**

Combine left and right samples for culture  
Culture left and right samples separately  
Left breast sample only  
Right breast sample only

Accept Cancel Remove

