



Specimen Type and Culture Media Table

Introduction

Specimens received in the laboratory must be plated on appropriate culture media to isolate the microorganisms that are suspected of causing infection. The selection of culture media to plate is based on the site of the infection and the suspected microorganism causing the infection. The table below provides examples of recommended media that can be plated to recover microorganisms from a particular body site. Selection of types and forms can vary depending on the laboratory protocol and availability.

Specimen Type	Culture Media Used
Cerebral Spinal Fluid (CSF)	BAP, CHOC
Gastrointestinal Tract	BAP, MAC, HE or XLD*, CAMPY, GN Broth or SF Broth*, SMAC, CHROMagar**, TCBS (Vibrio spp.), SS*
Genital	BAP, CHOC, TM/ML*
Respiratory Tract	BAP, CHOC, MAC, CHROMagar** (MRSA)
Tissue	BAP, CHOC, MAC, C-CNA or PEA*, THIO, AnaBAP***
Urine	BAP, MAC, CHROMagar**
Wound or Abscess	BAP, CHOC, MAC, C- CNA or PEA*, AnaBAP***

*Some of these media perform the same function and one or more may be used depending on a laboratory's protocols.

** CHROMagar formulations vary according to their use. CHROMagar for stools differs from that used to detect MRSA or urinary tract pathogens.

*** AnaBAP may have different formulations that are used based on a laboratory's protocols.

Legend

- AnaBAP = Anaerobic Blood Agar
- BAP = Blood Agar
- CHOC = Chocolate Blood Agar
- CAMPY = Campylobacter Agar
- C-CNA (CNA) = Columbia Colistin Nalidixic Acid Agar
- CHROMagar = Chromogenic Agar
- GN Broth or SF Broth = Gram Negative Broth/Selenite F Broth
- HE = Hektoen Enteric Agar
- MAC = MacConkey Agar
- PEA = Phenylethyl Alcohol Blood Agar
- SMAC = MacConkey-Sorbitol (Sorbitol-MacConkey) Agar

This job aid is a component of the free, on-demand CDC training course "Basic Culture Media and Isolation Techniques: Microbiology Curriculum." Find the course at <https://reach.cdc.gov/training>.

- SS = Salmonella Shigella Agar
- TCBS = Thiosulfate Citrate Bile Salts-Sucrose Agar
- THIO = Thioglycollate Broth
- TM/ML = Thayer-Martin Agar or Martin Lewis Agar
- XLD = Xylose Lysine Deoxycholate Agar

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