Changes to urine culture collection tubes - FAQs

What is changing?

We are changing the way we receive urine cultures from you. We have now transitioned to the Sarstedt Monovette for urine microscopy and culture. From **Monday 9 November**, urine samples being sent for culture should only be submitted using these either of these approved consumables.

Why is it changing?

The change is being made to improve the quality and safety of the urine testing pathway for patients. Boric acid is essential for accurate urine culture results, without it, urine culture has many more false-positive and non-clinically significant results. Using the approved containers will help to ensure turnaround times are met, reduce the risk of transcription errors and reduce the need for patients to provide repeat samples.

Are there benefits to turnaround times when using the approved urine culture collection tubes?

When a universal white top tube is received, it must be manually decanted into a suitable tube which has to be relabelled. The current high proportion of these means that this manual intervention can take an additional few hours which delays both a negative microscopy report and the commencement of the culture incubation period.

When a green topped tube is received in the lab, it goes straight onto the analyser for microscopy screening and the results of this are available for review by lab staff within 15 minutes.

If the microscopy parameters fall under the thresholds for onward culture, the negative report is issued and can be sent out by the following morning, if not later the same day. If microscopy is needed, the sample is sent for culture straight away.

This means that results are available to requesting clinicians faster allowing for any patient treatment to be started sooner, which we believe is a clinical improvement.

Why is preserving samples in boric acid better than without boric acid?

Samples received in boric acid tubes are significantly more stable than if they are in a plain white top universal tube. In the event of a service disruption, the incidence of sample cancellation is very small. Also, with no preservative the sample can be prone to bacterial overgrowth.

It seems like a lot of plastic to dispose of, is this environmentally friendly?

We're aware of concerns that both systems require a collection cup and therefore appear to introduce an additional piece of single-use plastic.

Urine samples were already being decanted into smaller analyser tubes in the laboratory, so a second consumable has always formed part of the urine culture process, although this would not previously have been visible to service users.

We remain committed to reducing our carbon footprint wherever possible, while working within infection control requirements.

Are these collection tubes in use anywhere else?

We did a survey of what other Pathology Services use across London Boroughs. Both Southwest London (St George's) and East-Southeast London (Bart's and the Royal London, which also includes LGT) Pathology use a vacutainer type tube and associated cup, and NW London (Charing Cross/St Mary's) have a pouring cup and screw top tube combo.

What happens if I send samples in the wrong tube?

From **Monday 9 November**, we will no longer process urine culture samples that are not received in one of the two approved tubes.