



Antimicrobial Stewardship and Stool Specimens

There are multiple concerns with inappropriate stool specimens:

- misdiagnosis of *C. difficile* infection & missed diagnoses of other causes of diarrhea,
- unnecessary placement of patients on precautions/isolation,
- unnecessary antimicrobial use, and
- cost burden (due to unnecessary lab tests and antimicrobial use)

DEFINITION of Diarrhea

3 or more episodes of unformed stools (type 6 or 7) in a 24 hour period

A prescriber's order is required prior to sending a stool specimen for analysis.

Do not send specimens if, in the last 24-48 hours, the patient had:

- a new medication, laxatives or enema

OR

- a diet change, medical condition (i.e. Crohn's, colitis), or recent medical procedure that could contribute to an unformed stool

OR

- only one to two episodes of type 6 or 7 stools in 24 hours

Type 6  Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool

Type 7  Watery, no solid pieces.
Entirely Liquid

Repeat specimens will not be processed if sent within 7 days of a previous *C.difficile* toxin test.

Patient's symptoms should be assessed to check for cure.
Stool samples should NOT be sent for test of cure.

The Microbiology Laboratory does not process formed stools; please do not send.

For more information refer to Bugs & Drugs and/or Antimicrobial Stewardship on Insite.