Swab Collection/Shipping Guidelines

Sample: Swab of solid surface

Swabs allow sampling in tight areas, analysis by both direct microscopic exam and culture, provide information similar to that obtained by bulk samples, and are preferred when a less destructive method of sample collection is desired.

Method: Quantitative culture for bacteria and/or fungi; microorganisms will be reported as colony forming units (CFU) per unit area. Direct microscopic exam (DME) may also be performed from a swab.

Collection:
Swabs are available from U.S. Micro-Solutions, call 724-853-4047.
Do not use "Q-tips" or other cotton swabs intended for personal use. These swabs are not appropriate for environmental sampling.

1. Select a sampling area where microbial growth is visible.
    - *Sampling sites include solid surfaces such as walls, concrete, HVAC systems, wood, carpets.*
    - *An area between 1 and 4 square inches is recommended for swab sampling.*
2. Wearing gloves, peel down the swab wrapper about 1 inch.
    - *Apply strict aseptic technique when collecting samples.*
3. Remove the plug from the media tube by twisting; discard the plug.
4. Remove the swab from the wrapper and insert it into the media tube.
5. Squeeze the bottom of the tube until the liquid in the sponge wets the swab.
6. Rub the pre-moistened swab vigorously over the desired sampling area.
7. Insert the swab into the media tube and firmly close the cap.
8. Record the sample number on the tube.
    - *Record the unit area sampled for each swab.*

Shipping:
1. Clearly label each sample with a Sample Number and complete the Chain of Custody (COC).
2. Place the swabs in a Ziploc bag in a box with sufficient packing material to prevent damage and ship to the laboratory with the completed COC form.
3. Ship samples overnight at ambient temperature Monday through Friday for receipt within 24 hours of collection. Shipments on Fridays must be sent via Priority Overnight Saturday Delivery.

Sample Non-conformance:
- >48 hours between collection and analysis time