

Microbiology

The Microbiology laboratory studies microorganisms that can cause disease. Testing is performed on a large variety of specimens including urines, blood, throat swabs, faeces, wound swabs and sterile body fluids. Our primary focus is on bacteria but we also handle the testing for other microorganisms that may contribute to human illness, including viruses, fungi, and intestinal parasites.

Once we identify a specific microorganism, we perform “susceptibility tests” to determine which antibiotics will be effective. This involves testing the microorganism against a wide selection and concentration of antibiotics in order to allow the physician to make the right choice of antibiotics for treatment.

Microbiology also performs routine screening for several “superbugs” including Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus (MRSA) and Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE). We also perform testing for Clostridioides difficile (C. diff.) for diarrhea.

The microbiology laboratory is in daily contact with the Infection Prevention and Control Department in the hospital. Infection Prevention and Control is notified of all microorganisms that could be of public health concerns or that were acquired in the hospital so that appropriate actions may be taken to eliminate these infections and stop their spread to other areas. Pharmacy often consults with microbiology to discuss options for treatment when a patient has allergies to some drugs or if an organism is resistant to some antibiotics.