MRSA Sampling Guide

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, (MRSA) is a type of bacteria that is resistant to treatment with antibiotics related to penicillin. This bacterium is generally spread through direct contact with the hands of a health care worker or person who is infected or carrying the organism. There are also community-acquired infections that have occurred outside the hospital environment in places such as gyms, schools, daycares, cruise ships, and elderly care facilities.

EMSL Analytical, Inc. provides MRSA Analysis of Environmental Samples (swab, bulk, or water). *Please note, we are not able to accept clinical specimens for testing.*

Caution must be taken by wearing gloves when collecting samples from contaminated items; put on clean gloves immediately before collection. Remove gloves promptly after use, before touching non-contaminated items and environmental surfaces and wash hands immediately to avoid transfer of microorganisms to other environments.

Sampling Procedure

Swab Sampling

1. Obtain a sterile 1 mL HiCap Neutralizing broth Pur-Blue swab (Product ID 8708942) from EMSL to collect samples for culture.
2. Remove swab from packaging material and swab the desired area thoroughly; rolling the swab lightly back and forth over sampling area. A 4”x 4” area is recommended. Insert the swab into the tube and firmly close the cap. Ship the swabs to EMSL.

Bulk Samples

1. Wearing gloves, remove a small piece of the suspect material. Place piece inside a clean sterile container or new plastic bag (Ziplock).
2. Close the bag or cap the container and label appropriately.

Sample Shipping

- All samples must be shipped overnight cold, not frozen, within 24 hours from the sample collection. The best method of shipment for these samples is to use freezer packs, not bags of ice or loose ice. Samples that are not shipped properly could get contaminated and may be rejected by the lab.
- EMSL offers two culture-based MRSA testing methods (Code M729 for P/A) and (Code M730 for Quantitative).