


SYNOVIAL FLUID EXAMINATION

Investigation	Microscopy – White Cell Count, Crystal Examination and Gram Stain. Culture & sensitivity.
Inform lab before sending	Yes.
Ideal time to take specimen	Ideally prior to antimicrobial therapy - although treatment should not be withheld pending investigation.
Specimen container 	Sample Collection - 1 x Small green-top Lithium Heparin (1.2ml) tube (not the larger tube) 1 x 28ml sterile universal container
Labelling requirements	See LCL Minimum Data Set Policy
How to take specimen & Volume required	Clean skin thoroughly over the joint with two separate applications of alcoholic chlorhexidine using rough (12 ply) surgical gauze allowing antiseptic to dry fully before proceeding to joint aspiration using aseptic / non-touch technique. With needle remaining attached to syringe, aspirate 0.5ml into the Lithium Heparin green-top tube, and the remainder into the sterile 28ml universal container.
Transport to the laboratory	Samples to be placed in Medical Microbiology specimen bag (with completed request form) and dispatched immediately via the pneumatic tube system to the Medical Microbiology Laboratory (Pod Destination 710 or 720).
Turnround	Microscopy results (White Cell Count, Crystals and Gram Stain) within four hours of receipt of specimen. Culture report 48-72 hours, but up to 5 days if further work is required.
Additional Information	Relevant clinical information including a brief description of symptoms; possibility of TB, presence of known virus infections should be included on the request form to ensure appropriate investigations are performed. Steroid treatment may interfere with the examination – steroid crystals may be present when the specimen is examined. Please indicate on the request form if such therapy has been used.
Specimen retention	Please ensure that any requests for additional investigations on the specimen are made within 7 days from the date of the original request.