



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
LABORATORY SERVICES  
630 HART LANE  
NASHVILLE, TN 37243

**To:** All Providers of Group A Streptococcus Specimens

**From:** David L. Smalley, M.S.S., Ph.D., B.C.L.D. *DLS*  
Director, Laboratory Services

**Date:** February 24, 2009

**Subject:** **Discontinuation of Routine Throat Culture Testing**

In the last few years, there have been several advances in Group A Streptococcus point of care latex agglutination tests. The current tests are highly sensitive and specific and provide rapid results for the attending physician. These tests are easy to perform by following the manufacturer's package insert. The positive results obtained from these tests are reliable and can be used for immediate treatment of the patient. Because these tests provide reliable results and provide immediate validation for patient treatment, the use of these tests is preferred over the traditional culture method that requires 24-48 hours to complete.

The majority of county health departments and physician offices now has these tests and perform them as their routine method of testing for Group A Streptococcus in the throat. Their use has dramatically reduced the number of tests performed by the State Public Health Laboratory. In addition, the Public Health Nurse's training course we conduct has trained personnel from most health departments on the proper techniques and use of the Rapid Strep method. Effective, April 1, 2009, Laboratory Services will discontinue routine throat culture testing for Group A Streptococcus. The laboratory will maintain identification of Streptococcus reference isolates and confirmation of cultures for cases of drug treatment failure.

Any health department which needs assistance in performing Rapid Strep tests or help training nurses to perform the rapid Strep test, may contact Sean O'Connell, 615-262-6318 or [Sean.Oconnell@state.tn.us](mailto:Sean.Oconnell@state.tn.us) for assistance. If you have any other questions, you may contact:

Middle Tennessee - Henrietta Hardin, 615-262-6362 or [Henrietta.Hardin@state.tn.us](mailto:Henrietta.Hardin@state.tn.us)

East Tennessee – Dr. Robyn Atkinson, 865-549-5201 or [Robyn.Atkinson@state.tn.us](mailto:Robyn.Atkinson@state.tn.us)

West Tennessee – Dr. Oristyne Walker, 731-426-0686 or [Oristyne.E.Walker@state.tn.us](mailto:Oristyne.E.Walker@state.tn.us)