



CULTURES AND SENSITIVITY TESTS

Infections can be caused by viruses, bacteria or microscopic parasitic organisms. In evaluating an infection, it is sometimes necessary to determine exactly what type of organism is responsible. A test called a culture can provide that information.

A culture may be indicated in the following situations:

1. An infection which may be life threatening, such as meningitis or cellulitis.
2. Ear or urine infections which are not improving despite antibiotic drugs.
3. Persistent diarrhea.

In performing a culture, we collect a sample of blood, urine, spinal fluid, stool or discharge from your child. This material is then incubated in a nutrient mixture. Over the following days, the offending pathogen will multiply, forming a colony of identical organisms. By inspecting these organisms under the microscope, we can usually determine their exact identity. Accordingly, an appropriate treatment can be planned.

Sensitivity Tests:

Once a bacterial pathogen has been identified, additional information can be obtained by testing that bacteria's sensitivity to a variety of antibiotics. This information is particularly helpful when an infection is particularly aggressive and/or unresponsive to standard antibiotic therapy.

