



DIVISION OF CLINICAL MICROBIOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF PATHOLOGY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE
Indiana University Health
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Blood Culture Testing at IU Health

September 16, 2021

Effective September 16, 2021, the IU Health Division of Clinical Microbiology will be temporarily implementing a shortened incubation protocol for all blood culture orders due to blood culture instrument capacity limitations. All blood cultures submitted for testing will be finalized after 4 days of incubation as opposed to the routine 5-day protocol. Four-day incubation has been shown to detect >99% of clinically significant microorganisms in recent studies^{1,2}; of the isolates detected after 5 days of incubation, the vast majority were determined to be contaminants introduced at the time of blood collection. A disclaimer will accompany each negative result that is affected by this change.

This temporary change is being initiated to increase capacity on the blood culture instruments and to ensure uninterrupted care for as many patients as possible amidst the ongoing COVID-19 surge. A subsequent announcement will be made when the laboratory is able to return to routine protocols.

If there are any questions on test requirements or ordering, please call IU Health Pathology Laboratory Client Services at 317.491.6000 or 800.433.0740. For any additional information, please contact Dr. Christopher Emery, Section Director, Bacteriology, IU Health Clinical Microbiology Laboratory by email at cemery@iuhealth.org.

References:

¹de Ponfilly et al. Seasonal variations in blood culture numbers and time to positivity and potential impact of reducing incubation periods. *Eur J Clin Microbiol Infect Dis*. 2021 Apr 23;1-7. ~~doi:~~

²Ranson et al. Evaluation of optimal blood culture incubation time to maximize clinically relevant results from a contemporary blood culture instrument and media system. *J Clin Microbiol*. 2021 Feb 18;59(3)e02459-20.