

Using the Hygiene and Monitoring Swab

The **Expose Hygiene and Monitoring Swabs** have been designed to detect organisms on surfaces such as work surfaces, equipment, hands and even in liquids. Each of the types of swabs have been tested against known amounts of organisms they are designed to detect and have been shown to be capable of detecting low levels of bacteria.

Bacteria are good at hiding!

Bacteria are microscopic! Because of this they are able to hide in very tiny spaces –such as small cracks or even scratches. Corners of equipment where dirt can build up is prime territory for bacteria. Rough areas, even after disinfection, can still harbour bacteria. The human hand has places where bacteria can hide away undetected. Think of the dirt that accumulates under your nails!

Good hygiene is about understanding bacteria

By understanding bacteria and how they act, you will be able to control them. With this in mind, disinfecting needs to be thorough and be able to get into those spaces. For example there are specific techniques and methods that have been developed for washing hands – and for good reason!

Understanding bacteria also comes in to play when checking the hygiene of areas. When swabbing with the Hygiene and Monitoring Swabs, don't only swab the areas where there are no hiding places. Yes – this may give you a clean record, but it won't help you control the hygiene in your facility.

A step-by-step on how to use the swabs

- When removing the swab from the sheath, give a slight twist to the swab while pulling it out.
- Swab the areas where you think bacteria are going to hide. The grooves, crevices and corners of surfaces or hands.
- Swab a good size of the surface - an area of approximately 25cm² is considered a good area to swab.
- Don't swab lightly. Make sure the area has been covered well with the swab. Make a couple of passes over the surface.
- Turn the swab while swabbing – if bacteria are present on the surface or hands – cover all sides of the swab with them. This gives a better chance of them being picked up and will give a better colour reaction.
- If using the swab to monitor a liquid, such as water or milk, move the swab generously around in the liquid so as to “saturate” the swab.
- Ensure the swab does not touch any surface other than the surface or liquid being tested.
- Replace the swab into the sheath ensuring it makes adequate contact with the media. If necessary move the swab up and down in the media a couple of times to ensure this. The swab **MUST NOT** under any condition be removed from the sheath again once it is placed back into it.
- Place the swab into the incubator (ensuring the incubator is on) and read it after 18 – 24 hours. If there is a contamination problem, an indication should be given at this point. Re-incubate for another 18-24 hours and record the final result on the relevant “Record Sheet” provided or on your own record system. NOTE: incubation times and colour reactions will differ depending on what swab is used. Refer to the interpretation guideline for more detail.
- Include a “control” swab each time you incubate swabs. This is a swab that has not been used. This should always remain without a colour change. If there is a colour change contact Praecautio for assistance (081 043 3506 or neil@praecautio.co.za). The control swab can be used the next time a test is conducted.
- Once a record has been taken of the result, place the swab into the disposal box provided. Once the box is full contact the staff Praecautio and they will organise collection of the box for safe disposal.
- A swab can only be used once.
- A swab has a 2 month shelf life (from date of manufacture) on condition that it is kept at 2-8°C until such time as it is used.