New Boric Acid Containers for Urine Culture
The specimen containers used for urine microbiology culture are changing. The new specimen containers include boric acid preservative. The presence of boric acid helps to maintain the microbiological quality of the specimen and prevents overgrowth of organisms during transport to the lab. Boric acid containers are used commonly in most laboratories. The decision to move to boric acid containers is based on improving the quality of the test results.

The new boric acid containers will be supplied for routine microbiology urine analysis only. They should not be used for specimens requiring Chlamydia testing or a pregnancy test – for which a plain universal container should still be used.

The new containers are the standard 30ml universal size, with a red lid and a small amount of white boric acid powder in the bottom.

Box A: Boric Acid Universal Containers (red cap)
Should only be used for:

Microbiology urine microscopy and culture
- All other tests using this universal will be rejected
- Please do not remove the boric acid (white powder) and use as a plain container - the residual boric acid may affect the test results

Box B: Plain Universal Containers (white cap)
Should continue to be used for:
- Urines for pregnancy testing
- Urines for Chlamydia PCR testing
- Urines for Legionella / pneumococcal antigen testing
- Urines (EMU) for mycobacterium culture
- Urines for microscopy and culture (if boric acid container is unavailable)
- Sterile fluids, pus, tissue specimens for culture
- Other pathology tests where appropriate

Supply
Pathology stores will start supplying the new boric acid containers in place of the plain (white-top) containers for microbiology urine culture. Plain containers will continue to be available from stores for other tests performed by the pathology departments (see Box B above).

Dip-Stick Testing
It is common practice for plain universal containers to be used for dip-stick testing (leucocytes, protein etc). Please check whether the dip-stick product you use is compatible with urine containing boric acid. There are manufacturers whose dip-sticks are not affected by the presence of boric acid (e.g. Medi-Test Combi 8). Further guidance should be available from your dip-stick supplier.