

Memo

To:	Clinical Services Waitaha and Te Tai O Poutini
From:	Dr Anja Werno, Acting Clinical Director Microbiology
Date:	6 October 2026
Subject:	Blood culture collection practice guidelines

To support timely and practical blood culture collection, two adult blood culture sets may be collected from the same venepuncture site when the patient meets “Sepsis Six” criteria on the Sepsis Pathway. For all other patients with suspected bacteraemia, two adult blood culture sets should be collected from separate venepuncture sites.

Key points:

1. For patients meeting criteria for “Sepsis Six” on the Sepsis Pathway, at least **two** sets of blood cultures should be collected from a single venepuncture site. Two sets means 4 bottles in total.
2. For all other patients requiring blood cultures, but not meeting “Sepsis Six” criteria, at least **two** sets of blood cultures from separate venepuncture sites is recommended. Collecting from two separate venepuncture sites improves the ability to distinguish true bloodstream infection from contamination and supports more accurate diagnosis and treatment decisions.
3. For patients with suspected subacute bacterial endocarditis, **three** sets of blood cultures from separate venepuncture sites is recommended to demonstrate continuous bacteraemia.
4. If central venous access devices (CVAD) are present, also sample each lumen. In this situation only a single peripheral venepuncture is required. The peripheral sample should be collected before any CVAD samples.
5. Single blood culture sets have reduced sensitivity and should be avoided.

Sepsis Tools

Staff are encouraged to refer to the Clinical Tools/ NZ Sepsis Trust for sepsis recognition and management resources.



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