

■ HOW TO USE

Unscrew the sealing cap from the dipslide container and withdraw the combined cap and tongue unit.

Hold by the cap to avoid touching the agar culture medium. Immerse the dipslide tongue into the fluid to be tested or expose the slide to the running fluid, ensuring that both agar surfaces have fully wetted. Remove the slide from the fluid and allow the excess liquid to drain off for a few seconds.

Replace the screw cap and tongue in the container.

■ INCUBATION

The dipslide should be incubated at a temperature of 30°C or at an approximate temperature equal to that of the fluid to be tested. The incubation temperature should be the same each time the test is performed to ensure a meaningful comparison from one test to the next.

The incubation period for bacteria is usually 24-48 hours. An incubation time of up to 24-72 hours for yeasts and moulds may be required to achieve quantifiable microbial growth. If the incubation temperature is considerably cooler than the fluid to be tested, microbial growth may be slowed and continued incubation for a further few days may be necessary to detect the presence of the organisms.

■ INTERPRETATION

Bacteria will grow on the paler straw-coloured agar. Most bacterial colonies will appear red but on occasion be colourless. The density or numbers of red and colourless colonies should be compared with the chart.

If the fluid to be tested has a severe infection, a confluent growth can appear on the surface of the slide, rather than distinct colonies. If this growth is colourless it could be misinterpreted as a negative result.

To prevent this all clear dip slides should be examined against a reflected light or compared with a sterile, unused dipslide.

■ DISPOSAL

Used Dipslides should be carefully disposed of either by incineration or by soaking the slide and its container in bleach overnight.

■ STORAGE

Dip slides should be stored in cool temperatures of 8-18°C, protected from droughts and direct sunlight and avoid freezing. This will preserve the moisture content in the agar.

Correctly stored these Dipslides will have a shelf life of 6-9 months and within this period will remain suitable for use as long as there is no visible contamination or noticeable contraction of the agar.

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Table showing bacterial growth

