

How to Collect a Stool Sample for Your Lab Test

Collecting a Stool Sample

Read all of the instructions before collecting a stool sample. It is important to follow the instructions so the sample is collected the right way. This will help your test results be correct.

Your health care provider has ordered the following test(s):

- stool pathogen PCR panel
- ova and parasites
- Cryptosporidium/giardia antigen
- Clostridium difficile
- Helicobacter pylori antigen
- white blood cell
- stool culture.

Follow any instructions your health care provider gives you.

Before You Collect Your Sample

- Do not take any of the following within 1 week of collecting your sample:
 - medicines to treat heartburn, indigestion or to prevent stomach ulcers (antacids)
 - barium or bismuth
 - medicines to treat diarrhea
 - oily laxatives such as castor oil.
- Your health care provider will give you instructions for picking up your specimen container(s) for collecting your sample.



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Your health care provider will give you instructions on where to pick up one or more specimen containers, depending on which test(s) you may need. Transfer only enough stool to raise the level of liquid to the “fill to here” line (top left photo). Do not overfill. There is not a “fill to here” line on the screw-cap container without liquid (top right photo).

- You will also need:
 - a clean collection device such as a shallow pan in which to collect your sample. Transfer part of the sample to the specimen container(s).
 - a plastic bag or clear plastic wrap to place over the toilet seat.
- To collect a sample from a child in diapers, line the diaper with clear plastic wrap. Transfer part of the sample to the specimen container(s).

Special Notes About Specimen Containers

- Some specimen containers include a liquid preservative. Do not pour out this liquid. You will add your sample to it. The liquid in the:
 - orange-cap specimen containers may cause irritation to skin or eyes.
 - Rinse or flush with cool water right away if contact occurs.
 - green-cap specimen container is poisonous.
 - **Call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department right away if you swallow any of this liquid.**
 - grey-cap and pink-cap specimen containers may cause irritation to your skin or eyes.
 - Rinse or flush with cool water right away if contact occurs. The solution is poisonous.
 - Call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department right away if you swallow any of this liquid.*
- Do not use a specimen container if:
 - the solution appears cloudy or yellow
 - it is past the expiration date.
- Keep your specimen container(s) away from heat or flames. The liquid will catch on fire (flammable).
- Keep your specimen container(s) out of the reach of children and pets.

How to Collect Your Sample

You will be collecting a sample for one or more tests, depending on your health care provider's order. You may use the same bowel movement for more than one test. For each test:

1. Unscrew the lid from the specimen container. Set aside.
2. Prepare the collection container (clean shallow pan, plastic bag or clear plastic wrap) in which you will collect your sample.
3. Collect the sample. **Do not collect stool that has been mixed with water or urine.**
4. Using the plastic spoon attached to the lid, scoop out samples from bloody, slimy or watery areas of the stool (if present). If the stool is hard, select areas from each end and the middle of the stool.
5. Transfer enough of the selected stool to the orange- and green-cap specimen containers to raise the level of liquid to the "fill to here" line. **Do not overfill.**

If you have a screw-cap container without liquid, transfer the liquid stool (about the size of a walnut) to this container. There is not a "fill to here" line on this container.
6. Screw the lid back on the container. Make sure it is closed tightly. **Shake to mix.**
7. Write the following information on the container with a pen or marker that will not run if the ink gets wet:
 - full name
 - date of birth
 - date and time of collection.
8. Place the specimen container in a zip-close bag and seal it.
9. To store (until ready to return your sample):
 - place the orange-cap specimen container in the refrigerator
 - keep the green-, pink- and grey-cap specimen containers at room temperature
 - keep the screw-cap container without liquid in the refrigerator.

Repeat steps 1 to 9 if your health care provider directed you to take more than one test.

Returning Your Sample

- You will need to return your sample to your clinic or health care provider who ordered the test:
 - the same day as collecting for the stool pathogen PCR panel
 - within 24 hours of collecting for white blood cell
 - within 48 hours of collecting for other tests.
- Bring a photo ID such as a driver's license and your insurance card with you.

When You Will Get the Results of Your Lab Test(s)

- **1 to 2 days:** stool pathogen PCR panel, Clostridium difficile, Cryptosporidium/ Giarda antigen, Helicobacter pylori antigen, white blood cell
- **up to 7 days:** ova and parasites
- **up to 2 weeks:** stool culture.

Call your health care provider to get your results or if you have questions.