

How To Collect a Stool Specimen

Your doctor has asked you to collect a stool (faecal) specimen. This is a common test used to investigate diarrhoea and other gut problems. Though you may find collection of the sample unpleasant, your doctor has decided that the test is necessary and important.

It is important to follow the instructions below carefully to give the laboratory and your doctor the best chance of determining what is wrong. In some cases, up to three samples from different bowel motions may be required. This is because some infections in the bowel may not be found in a single sample.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ensure that your / the patient's name and date of birth, and the date and time are written on the specimen jar prior to use.
2. Ensure that these details match those on the laboratory request form (if available).
3. The best way to collect the stool specimen is by placing a large clean container inside the toilet bowl. The container does not need to be sterile but must be clean and dry.
4. Pass the stool into the container.
5. Using the small scoop attached to the lid of the specimen jar, collect some of the stool from the container and transfer it to the jar. Be careful not to contaminate the outside of the jar. You only need a small amount i.e. half-filling the jar is ample.
6. Screw the lid on tightly.
7. Place the jar into the plastic bag and ensure the bag is sealed.
8. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
9. Keep the specimen jar cool e.g. on a freezer pack in a cooler, but do not freeze.
10. Ensure that the sample is sent to the laboratory as soon as possible. You will have been advised where to deliver the specimen by your doctor.

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

1. The instructions above apply to children who are toilet trained.
2. If urine significantly contaminates the stool specimen, it is best to collect another sample.
3. Plastic wrap can be used to line the nappy of an infant.