

How to collect a faecal specimen at home

Information for Patients or Carers

The doctor or nurse will explain why a stool (faecal) specimen is required, how this should be obtained and when your results will be available. You will be supplied with the correctly labelled specimen container and laboratory form. The information in this sheet may help if you have to provide a stool (faecal) specimen at home.



Examples of specimen containers.

How to collect a stool specimen at home:

Step 1. Place a clean wide mouth container (for example empty plastic food container/one-litre ice cream carton, or a potty) in the toilet bowl or place a clean newspaper or plastic wrap over the toilet seat opening (If the stool is very watery this may not be possible).

Step 2. Pass the stool into the potty, plastic container or onto newspaper or plastic wrap.

Step 3. Place small scoops of the stool into the specimen container using the spoon built into the lid of the specimen container (or the wooden stick, if supplied). Try to make sure that any parts of the stool which appear bloody, slimy or watery are put into the specimen container. If possible try not to mix urine with the stool sample – do not worry if this not possible.

Step 4. Do not overfill the specimen container (the fill line indicates the required amount). Try not to spill the stool on the outside of the specimen container. If this happens clean the outside of the specimen container with soap and warm water, then wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water and dry.

Step 5. Put on the specimen container lid and screw on tightly. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water and dry.

Step 6. Dispose of the remaining stool in the potty, plastic container or newspaper into the toilet.

Step 7. If you have used a reusable container such as a potty, clean with your usual toilet cleaner. Ensure the potty is clean and dry before reuse. If you have used plastic wrap, newspaper or a disposable container, wrap these in newspaper then put into a disposable bag and place in your outside bin.

Step 8. Place the specimen container in the plastic bag attached to the specimen request form (or the envelope provided if for posting) and make sure the bag/envelope is properly sealed.

Step 9. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water and dry.

Step 10. Deliver to the doctor's surgery or post it as soon as possible (preferably the same day).