

How should I collect and store a urine sample?

You should:

- collect your urine sample in a sterile (completely clean) container
- store it in a fridge in a sealed plastic bag if you can't hand it in straight away

Collecting a urine sample

Your doctor or another healthcare professional should give you a container and explain to you how to collect the urine sample.

You can collect a urine sample at any time of day unless your GP or practice nurse advises you otherwise.

The types of urine sample you might be asked for include a random specimen, first morning specimen or timed collection.

To collect a clean urine sample:

- label the container with your name, date of birth and the date
- wash your hands
- men should wash their penis
- women should wash their genitals, including between the labia (lips around the entrance to the vagina)
- start to urinate but don't collect the first part of urine that comes out
- collect a sample of urine 'mid-stream' (see below) in a sterile screw-top container
- screw the lid of the container shut
- wash your hands thoroughly

If your doctor gives you any other instructions, you should also follow these.

What is a mid-stream urine sample?

A mid-stream urine sample means that you don't collect the first part of urine that comes out or the last part. This reduces the risk of the sample being contaminated with bacteria from:

- your hands
- the skin around the urethra (tube that carries urine out of the body)

Storing a urine sample until you hand it in

If you can't hand your urine sample in within an hour, you should keep it in the fridge at around 4C (39F) for no longer than 24 hours. Put the container of urine in a sealed plastic bag first. If the urine sample isn't kept in a fridge, the bacteria in it can multiply. This may affect the test results.

What are urine samples used for?

Your GP or another healthcare professional may ask for a urine sample to help them diagnose or rule out health conditions. Urine contains waste products that are filtered out of the body. If it contains anything unusual, this may indicate an underlying health problem.

For example, a high level of glucose (sugar) in your urine may be a sign of type 2 diabetes. Other reasons for a urine sample include checking if you:

- have a urinary tract infection (UTI)
- have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- are pregnant