

Stool sample collection at home

Why does my child need a stool sample tested?

Children can have diarrhea (increase in the number and looseness of stools or bowel movements) from many causes. If diarrhea lasts for more than 10 days to 2 weeks, a stool sample may need to be tested for bacteria (germs) or parasites.

What should I do?

If your child has been taking antibiotics, antacids, or medicines to stop the diarrhea, tell the doctor or nurse. You may need to wait 8 to 10 days after stopping these medicines before collecting the stool sample. If your child is scheduled for other tests such as X-rays, you may need to collect the stool sample first.

You will receive one or more special containers. **Do not** bring stool in any other container. **Keep the containers out of children's reach.** Some have preservative in them, which is poisonous.

Preparing to collect the stool

For children in diapers, line the inside of the diaper with plastic wrap, to prevent the diaper from absorbing the stool.

For older children, put plastic wrap, newspaper, or a special collection container under the toilet seat to catch the stool. **Never** take the sample out of the water in the toilet bowl and do not allow urine to touch it. If your child urinated at the same time, do not collect this stool. Toilet water and urine will destroy the germs or parasites.

Collecting the stool sample

1. Take the caps off of the containers. Using the spoon in the lid of the container or wooden tongue depressor, collect stool from areas that are bloody, slimy, or watery. Collect enough fresh stool to fill the containers to the "Fill Here" line. **Do not overfill.**
2. Screw the cap on tightly.
3. If the container has preservative in it, shake well.
4. **Important:** Write on the containers your child's full name, **and the date and time the sample was collected.** If this is not done, the lab cannot do the test, and you will have to repeat the stool collection.
5. Store properly and bring to the clinic as soon as possible:
 - Fresh samples: Keep in the refrigerator. Bring to the clinic within 2 hours.
 - Preserved samples: Keep at room temperature. Bring to the clinic within 48 hours.
6. Call the clinic for results:
 - stool cultures - call in 48 hours
 - ova and parasites - call in 24 hours

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the clinic.