Stool Test

Tips for collecting a stool sample

How can I prepare my child?

Many older children do not like the idea of giving a sample of their stool for testing, even if they can do it in their own bathroom. Talk to your child about the steps using simple, honest words.

Show them you understand by saying something like “I know this may be embarrassing for you. It can be awkward for grownups too, but we need to do this because…” This will allow your child to express their feelings and accept your help.

How do I collect a stool sample?

It is important that no urine or toilet water mix with the stool sample. These can interfere with testing. Please use the collection container given to you. Do not use jars or containers from home. They have detergents in them that can change the results of your child’s tests.

For children in diapers:

1. Line the inside of diaper with plastic wrap, as shown, or use a (urine) collection bag given to you by clinic or the lab. This will keep the stool sample from being absorbed into the diaper. If you use a collection bag, you will need to place the opening of the bag over your baby’s anus (the hole where the stool comes out). Peel off the white sticker from the bag to expose the adhesive. Press the adhesive firmly on to the skin around the anus to keep any urine from getting into the bag.

2. Put the stool sample into the collection container given to you. Use the wooden stick given to you to transfer the stool from the plastic wrap into the collection container, or put the entire collection bag into the container.

For toilet-trained children and teens:

There are two ways to collect a stool sample. Both options prevent the sample from falling into the toilet. Pick the one that will work best for your child. If the stool falls into the toilet water or is mixed with urine, do not collect it for testing. Watch your child if they are young and might not understand that their urine must be kept separate from the stool being collected.

The clinic or lab can provide you with a plastic collection device called a “hat” to help you collect the stool sample. The hat covers part of the toilet seat to make it easier to collect. If you choose to use a hat, follow these steps:

1. First have your child urinate into the toilet, without pooping.
2. Put the collection hat onto the toilet seat as pictured.
3. Ask your child to then poop into the collection hat.
4. Use the wooden stick given to you to transfer the stool from the hat into the collection container. Put the last part of the stool, the softest part, into the collection container.

5. If some stool is still hanging from your child’s bottom, instead of wiping it off, collect it using the wooden stick we gave you and put it in the container too.

You can also collect a stool sample by stretching plastic wrap over the toilet as shown.

1. Lift the toilet seat and cover the entire bowl with a large sheet of plastic wrap. If the plastic wrap does not stick to the toilet, you may need to use tape to secure it.

2. Make a small dip in the plastic so there is a place for the stool to collect.

3. Lower the toilet seat cover and have your child poop onto the plastic wrap.

4. Using the wooden stick given to you, transfer the last part of the stool into the collection container given to you.

The type of stool test your child is having is checked below. Please follow the instructions given.

- **72-Hour Stool Fat**
  
  **Amount needed:** collect all of your child’s stool over the next 72 hours. Only fill the container until it is half full. Then use a second container if needed.

  **Collection and handling tips:**
  
  - Keep the container refrigerated until you bring it to the lab.
  - Stool must be collected in the pre-weighed container from the lab; no other containers can be used.
  - Your child may not have laxatives, such as mineral or castor oils, or fat substitutes in their diet for 3 days before the stool collection.

- **Bacterial Culture**
  
  **Amount needed:** collect stool the size of a walnut or a 1-inch ball.

  **Collection and handling tips:**
  
  - Do not use rectal swabs to collect the sample.
  - Diaper samples must be collected using the plastic wrap collection method described above.
  - Keep the container refrigerated until you bring it to the lab.
  - Bring the sample to the lab **within 1 hour** of collection. If you are unable to deliver the sample within 1 hour, the sample may be refrigerated for up to 8 hours.
  - The sample will be tested for: Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter jejuni, Yersinia enterocolitica and E. coli 0157.
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- **Stool (Occult) Blood**
  
  **Amount needed:** collect stool the size of a walnut or 1-inch ball or to fit on to a Hemoccult card (given to you by the doctor or clinic).

  **Collection and handling tips:**
  
  - Avoid feeding your child red meat, turnips, horseradish, vitamin C (in excess of 250 mg/day), aspirin and anti-inflammatory medicine before you collect the sample.
  - Recommended foods are: small amounts of chicken and tuna, cooked fruits and vegetables, peanuts, popcorn, bran cereal.
  - Keep the container refrigerated until you bring it to the lab.

- **Stool Fat – one time collection**
  
  **Amount needed:** collect stool the size of a walnut or 1-inch ball.

  **Collection and handling tips:**
  
  - Your child may not have laxatives, such as mineral or castor oils, or fat substitutes in their diet for 3 days before the stool collection.
  - Diaper samples must be collected using the plastic wrap collection method described above.
  - Stool must be fresh; **less than 48 hours** old.
  - Keep the container refrigerated until you bring it to the lab.

- **Ova and Parasite examination**
  
  **Amount needed:** collect stool the size of a small bean or pea.

  **Collection and handling tips for fresh stool:**
  
  - Bring the sample to the lab **within 1 hour** of collection. If you are unable to deliver the sample within 1 hour, the sample may be refrigerated for up to 8 hours.
  - Do not use rectal swabs to collect the sample.
  - Diaper samples must be collected using the plastic wrap collection method described above.
  - Collect stool before, or at least 5 days after, your child has had a barium procedure.
  - If no parasites are seen in the first sample, you may be asked to get a second and third sample. Samples should be collected at least 72 hours apart.
  - Collection and handling tips when using an EcoFix container with preservative solution for the ova and parasite test:
    
    1. Open the container that contains the liquid preservative. Use the collection spoon built into the lid to place small scoopfuls of stool into the container. Take a sample from the last part of the stool that your child produced. Place enough stool in the solution so that the contents rise to the red line on the container.
2. Keep the solution away from your child. The liquid is poisonous. If it gets on the skin or in the eyes, rinse the area with water. If the skin or eyes are still irritated, call your child's healthcare provider.

3. It is unsafe to swallow the solution. If your child swallows it, take them to the emergency room right away. Watch them to make sure they are breathing normally. Bring the container and label with you when your child is treated.

☐ Other special stool collections for Stool pH, Stool Reducing Substances and Stool Chloride

- Bring the sample to the lab within 1 hour of collection.
- Diaper samples must be collected using the plastic wrap collection method described above.

If you have additional questions about the stool collection process, you may contact the Laboratory at 206-987-2102.

When and where can I drop off a sample?

Samples may be delivered to the lab during the following hours:

- **Seattle Children's Ocean 8 Laboratory:**
  - Monday through Friday: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
  - Weekends and holidays: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

- **Bellevue Clinic and Surgery Center Laboratory:**
  - Monday through Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
  - Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Closed: Sunday and holidays)

- **South Clinic Laboratory:**
  - Monday through Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
  - Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Closed: Sunday and holidays)

When will I know about the test results?

Results are sent to the doctor who ordered your child's test. Your child’s doctor will explain the test results and answer your questions. Please contact your child’s doctor for follow-up.