

Patient information factsheet

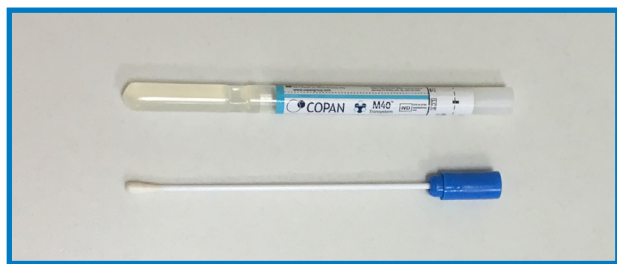
Collecting a self-taken vaginal swab

Your dermatology (skin specialist) doctor or nurse has asked you to take a vaginal swab for testing at the laboratory. You should have received two swabs (one to use, plus a back-up swab), a request form (if required) and a sample bag.

This factsheet explains how to collect a vaginal swab.

Example of a swab

Each packet contains a swab container and the swab itself.



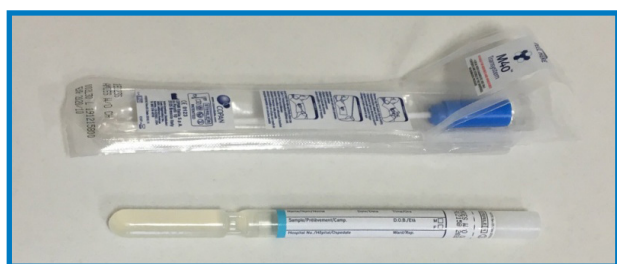
What is a self-taken vaginal swab?

This is a vaginal swab (a sample of cells from the vagina) taken by you yourself, rather than the doctor or nurse.

Before you collect the sample

You can take the sample at any time of the day.

1. Wash your hands using soap and warm water, rinse and dry.
2. Open the swab packet at the blue end (where it says 'peel here').
3. Remove the swab container from the packet, (**leave the swab INSIDE the packet at this stage**) and label the container with your name, date of birth and the date and time the sample is being taken.



If you have been provided with a request form, peel off the sticker in the very top left hand corner and stick this lengthwise over the label along the side of the container tube. Make sure the date and time of the swab is still visible. **Leave the barcode sticker on the request form.**

Patient information factsheet

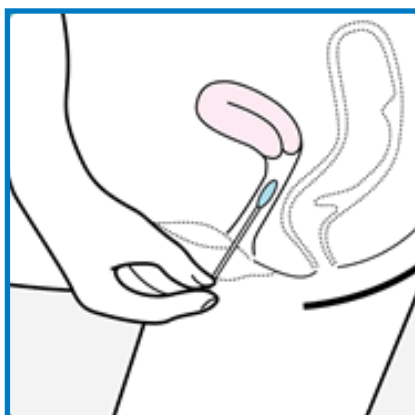
How to collect a vaginal swab

1. Twist the cap on the container tube to break the seal. Do not use if the seal is broken or damaged. Pull the cap off the container tube. Rest the container so the open end is uppermost, and the edges are not touching anything (it is a good idea to stand it upright in a clean mug).

Picture showing swab container with cap removed, swab remaining inside packet:



2. Remove the swab from the packet. Touch only the blue top. **Do not touch the white stalk or soft tip, or lie the swab down.** If you touch or drop the swab tip or the swab is laid down, discard the swab and use the back-up one provided.
3. Stand or lie in a comfortable position (as you would when inserting a tampon, for example). Hold the swab by the blue cap with one hand so the swab tip is pointing toward you. With your other hand, gently spread the skin outside the vagina. Insert the tip of the swab into the vaginal opening. Point the tip toward your lower back and relax your muscles.
4. Gently slide the swab **no more than** two inches into the vagina. If the swab does not slide easily, gently rotate the swab as you push. **If it is still difficult, do not attempt to continue.** Make sure the swab touches the walls of the vagina so that moisture is absorbed by the swab.
5. Rotate the swab for 10 to 15 seconds.



Patient information factsheet

6. Withdraw the swab without touching the skin. Place the swab in the container tube and push the cap in securely.



7. Place the labelled swab in the sealable part of the sample bag and seal. If you have been provided with a request form, fold this in half, and place in the other pocket of the specimen bag.



8. Wash your hands with soap and warm water, rinse and dry.

If you have any questions about how to take the swab, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Where do I deliver the sample to?

After collecting the sample, please return it with the test request form, ideally on the same day, or the following morning at the latest (see advice regarding storage below) to:

Dermatology reception
Level 2
Fanshawe Wing
Royal South Hants Hospital
Brintons Terrace
Southampton
SO14 0YG

Opening hours (for sample drop off): Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm

When you arrive at dermatology reception, please give your sample to the receptionist. You are free to leave once you have handed in your sample. Your results will be sent to your dermatology doctor.

For information about how to get to Royal South Hants Hospital, please visit our website:
www.uhs.nhs.uk

Patient information factsheet

How should I store my sample?

Ideally, you should deliver the sample to dermatology reception as soon as possible after the sample has been taken. If you cannot deliver the sample immediately it should be stored in a fridge at around 4°C, but for no longer than 24 hours. Place the sample in an extra plastic bag before putting it in the fridge.

What happens next?

The sample will be tested at the pathology department at Southampton General Hospital. Your results will normally be sent back to your dermatology doctor three to five days after the pathology department has received your sample.

We will only contact you if the test results suggest further action is needed. Results are not given out by the pathology department in order to protect patient confidentiality.

What happens to my sample after it has been tested?

Once your sample has been tested and a result has been sent back to your referring doctor, the remaining sample will be disposed of with the other laboratory waste.

Contact us

Dermatology department, Royal South Hants Hospital

Telephone: **023 8054 0204**

Email: **derm.op@uhs.nhs.uk**

Useful links

NHS website: **www.nhs.uk/conditions**

Trust website: **www.uhs.nhs.uk**

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**

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