

# Instructions for Stool Specimen Collection

## Purpose

A small sample is collected from the patient's bowel movement to determine the presence of parasites or pathogenic bacteria.

## Preparation

Collect stool specimens **before** taking antibiotics, anti-diarrhea compounds (such as Pepto-Bismol and Imodium), barium, bismuth or mineral oil. Specimen collection should be delayed until effects have passed (7 days after barium and 2-3 weeks after medication is discontinued). Infants: Line the back half of the diaper with plastic wrap. The skin should be cleansed of any powders or lotions.

## Collecting the Sample

The stool specimen should be passed directly into a clean, dry, wide-mouthed container (i.e. plastic margarine bowl) which can be disposed of afterward. **Note:** Stools must not be contaminated by urine or toilet water. Sample areas of stool which appear bloody, slimy, or watery. If the stool is formed, try to sample small amounts from each end and the middle.

For collection cups with no preservative, use the tongue depressor provided or a plastic spoon to transfer the sample. A sample the size of a walnut is sufficient. **Note:** Do not fill the cup. Tighten the lid to prevent leakage and refrigerate the specimen.

For vials with preservative (blue, green, pink, orange) use the spoon built into the lid for sampling. Place enough specimen into the vial to raise the liquid level to the red "Fill to Here" line.

**Note:** Do not overfill the vial.

Mash formed stool against the side of the vial with the spoon. Tighten the lid and shake firmly until the specimen is well mixed.

## Returning the Sample

On each container write the patient name, birth date, date and time the specimen was collected. Collection containers with no preservative (sterile cup or white lid) must be refrigerated and kept cold from the time it is collected until it is delivered to the lab. Deliver them to the McFarland Lab within 48 hours.

Specimens for culture (green lid or orange lid) must be kept at room temperature and returned to the lab within 72 hours.

Specimens for parasites [blue or pink lid] must be kept at room temperature and are stable for weeks.

**Note:** If you are given multiple blue-topped vials, collect each specimen at least 24 hours apart. An interval of 2-3 days is best.

## Causes for Rejection

Specimens will be rejected if:

- There is leakage or gross contamination on the outside of the container

- There is obvious contamination or urine, toilet water, or toilet paper
- Containers with preservatives (blue, green, pink) that have been refrigerated or gotten cold in transit
- Collection cups with no preservative that have not been kept cold

Specimens that are not brought in within the recommended time will need to be recollected. Multiple samples that are collected more than 24 hours apart will be tested. (I.e. if three specimens are submitted, and # 1 and #3 are 24 hours apart, only #2 will be rejected.)

**Cautions:**

Preservatives are poisonous. Do not drink. Keep out of reach of children. If ingested, dilute by drinking milk or water. Then call the local poison center or physician immediately. If preservatives come into contact with the eyes and skin, flush with running water. See a physician if a rash or irritation develops.