



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Collecting a Random Urine Sample

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Department of Clinical Biochemistry

① For more information, please contact:

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Why is a Urine Sample Needed?

Although many laboratory tests can be carried out on blood samples, some conditions are best diagnosed by analysing a small amount of urine. For example, levels of protein and electrolytes (salts) in the urine may be used to investigate kidney function. Other tests can be used to diagnose infections, problems with metabolism and conditions associated with raised hormone levels. Occasionally urine samples are required to detect unusual substances such as toxins, metals or drugs.

Some of these tests can be done immediately on a single urine sample (random urine). Others require a longer collection over 24 hours to provide a more detailed result.

If you are preparing for a 24h urine collection, please refer to the separate leaflet on Collecting a 24h Urine Sample.

Collection Containers

Your GP or another healthcare professional, such as a nurse, should explain why a urine sample is required and how to collect it. Random samples can be collected at any time of day. In some cases however, you might be asked to collect a urine sample at particular times of the day e.g. first thing in the morning (first-void urine). It is important that you follow these instructions carefully. For most urine tests, you will be provided with a clean, dry, screw-top plastic container. If you lose the collection container, contact your local GP surgery to ask for a replacement.

How to Collect a Urine Sample

Collecting a urine sample may sound easy, but it is important to follow these instructions in order to minimise contamination from your hands and the skin around your urethra (the tube which carries urine out of the body). You must also follow any additional instructions. If, for example, your doctor instructs you to collect “first-void urine,” you must collect the first urine you pass on getting up in the morning.

It is important that all urine samples are ‘midstream’ samples. If you struggle to keep a steady hand, you may find it easier to collect your urine into a larger, disposable plastic vessel such as a clean, empty ice cream tub or yoghurt pot rather than into the urine pot directly.

To collect a clean 'midstream' urine sample:

1. Label the urine pot supplied by your GP with your full name, date of birth and the date in the spaces provided using a biro or waterproof pen.
2. When you are ready to urinate, wash your hands, unscrew the lid and ensure that you have a clean plastic container to hand – this may either be the sample pot itself or a larger plastic tub, if this makes catching the urine easier.
3. Start to urinate and move your chosen container into the urine stream halfway through so that you have a "mid-stream" sample. About 10 mL of urine is plenty for most tests.
4. If you have used a plastic tub to catch your sample, carefully decant the contents into the labelled urine pot and dispose of any excess in the toilet.
5. Screw the lid of the urine pot shut and wipe off any drips with toilet roll.
6. Wash your hands thoroughly.
7. Place the container into a clear plastic bag. Check that your name and date of birth remain clearly visible and readable.
8. Put anything you used to collect the sample (e.g. plastic food container) into a plastic waste bag, tie it up and put it the bin.

Storing a Urine Sample

Urine samples should be handed in as soon as possible. If you can't hand the sample in immediately, you should store it in a fridge in a plastic bag, ready to hand in to your GP at the earliest opportunity (ideally within 24 hours of collecting it).

This prevents bacteria in the sample from multiplying and giving misleading test results.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Maria de Ferrars, Principal Clinical Scientist, Laboratory Medicine, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725599.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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