

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

# Collection of a self-taken vaginal swab

Your GP/doctor/nurse has asked you to take a vaginal swab for testing at the laboratory and should have given you the swab below, a request form (if required) and a sample bag. These instructions tell you how to collect a vaginal swab.



If you have not been provided with this swab then you should request one from your GP/doctor/nurse.

### What is a self-taken vaginal swab?

This is a vaginal swab taken by the patient themselves rather than the GP/doctor/nurse.

### Timing of the sample

This sample can be taken any time of the day.

### Before you collect the sample

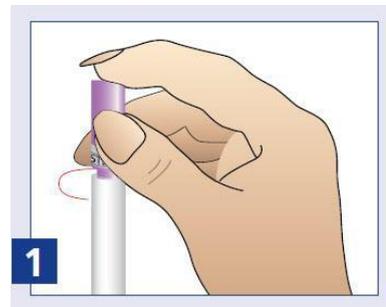
Wash your hands using soap and warm water, rinse and dry. Label the container with your name, date of birth and the date and time the sample was taken.

It is important to maintain a comfortable balance during the collection procedure.

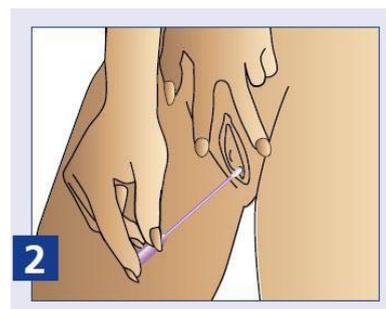
### How to collect a vaginal swab

1. Twist the cap to break the seal (**Figure 1**). Do not use if seal is broken or damaged. Pull the cap with the attached swab off of the tube. Do not touch the soft tip or lay the swab down.

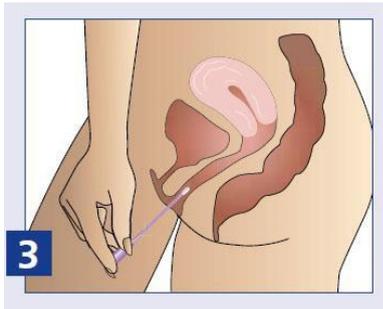
If you touch or drop the swab tip or the swab is laid down, discard the swab and request another one.



2. Hold the swab by the 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 (**Figure 2**). Point the tip toward your lower back and relax your muscles.



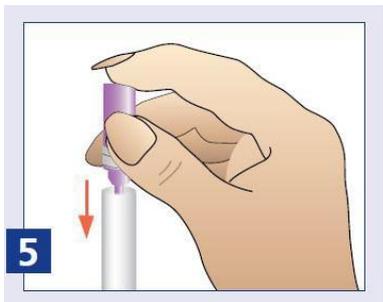
3. Gently slide the swab **no more than two inches** into the vagina (**Figure 3**). If the swab does not slide easily, gently rotate the swab as you push. **If it is still difficult, do not attempt to continue.** Make sure the swab touches the walls of the vagina so that moisture is absorbed by the swab.



4. Rotate the swab for 10-15 seconds (**Figure 4**).



5. Withdraw the swab without touching the skin. Place the swab in the tube and cap securely (**Figure 5**).



6. Place the labelled swab in the sample bag and seal.
7. Wash your hands with soap and warm water, rinse, and dry.

If you have any questions about the above procedure please ask your GP/doctor/nurse.

#### **Where do I deliver the sample to?**

After collecting the sample, please return it on the same day with the test request form, to either your GP surgery or the Pathology Department at King's Mill Hospital or Newark Hospital.

The Pathology Department at King's Mill Hospital is found by following the signs to the Bereavement Centre and the MRI Scanner. The department's main door is situated on the left near the top of the corridor.

There is a free 15 minute drop off/collection zone outside King's Mill Hospital's main reception and volunteers are available in the entrance foyer to give directions.

The Pathology Department at Newark Hospital is situated on the ground floor next to the Mercia Doughty Preoperative Assessment Unit. When you arrive at Pathology you should take your sample to the delivery hatch at the reception. The staff will check your details and take the sample from you.

You are free to leave once you have handed in your sample as your results will be forwarded to your referring doctor.

Site maps and directions to King's Mill Hospital and Newark Hospital can be found on the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website – please see 'Further sources of information'.

#### **How should I store my sample?**

The sample should ideally be delivered to your GP or Pathology Department as soon as possible after the sample has been taken.

If you cannot deliver the sample immediately it should be stored in a fridge around 4°C, but for no longer than 24 hours. Place the sample in a further plastic bag before putting it in the fridge.

#### **Where is my sample tested?**

The sample is processed at the Pathology Department at King's Mill Hospital.

#### **How do I get my results?**

Your results will normally be sent back to your referring doctor three to five days after the Pathology Department has received your sample. Results are not given out by the Pathology Department to patients 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 is disposed of with the other laboratory waste.

## **Useful information**

Lab Tests Online:  
[www.labtestsonline.org.uk](http://www.labtestsonline.org.uk)

## **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

## **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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