Collection of a Stool Sample

Before Collection

Some medicines affect test results. Consult with the physician and before collecting an unacceptable sample, wait 10 days before collecting a stool specimen after cessation of the following:

- Antibiotics (Ex. Kaopectate, Peptobismol, etc.)
- Antiarrheals (Ex. Kaopectate, Peptobismol, etc.)
- Antacids (Ex. Rolaids, Maalox, etc.)
- Oily laxatives
- Suppositories
- Recent barium X-ray test

NO “ROCK” HARD STOOL SPECIMENS WILL BE ACCEPTED for O&P or Stool Cultures. NO FORMED STOOL SPECIMENS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR Clostridium difficile testing.

INPATIENTS: If patient has been in the hospital longer than three days and develops diarrhea, request a Clostridium difficile test, not a culture or O&P. Only one C.difficile PCR test is needed to assess for C. difficile infection.

NOTE: No more than one same test order per day (~24 hrs part) will be accepted on stool specimens. Up to three samples collected over a 10 day period is recommended for multiple O&P orders.

What You Will Need

- Patient instructions (Stool Collection Instructions), special collection devices, containers and preservative kits are available at all Poudre Valley Health System Laboratories.
- For Culture, C. difficile, Ova and Parasites, Giardia/Cryptosporidium:
  - OUTPATIENTS:
    ⇒ Check orders to include the proper collection containers.
    ⇒ Occult Blood testing requires the patient to use the Hemoccult cards (follow special patient instructions that come with the cards)
    ⇒ C.difficile testing must be collected as unpreserved, fresh, unformed (must conform to the shape of the container) stool only. Store and transport at 2-8°C.
    ⇒ Preservative collection kits are greatly encouraged for convenience and better recovery when testing for Culture or Ova and Parasites.
    Orange top C&S vial: Used for Bacterial Culture.
    PARAPAK Pink top Formalin and Grey top ZN-PVA vials: Used for Ova and Parasites, and just the Pink top Formalin vial for the Giardia/Cryptosporidium Ag.

  NOTE: Approximately one tablespoon of stool is needed to fill each vial up to the red line.

  - INPATIENTS: (or if no preservative kits are available)
    ⇒ Transport fresh stool specimens for Culture and O&P to the Lab within 30 minutes!
    ⇒ Culture and O&P tests should not be performed on patients in the hospital >72hrs. Consider one C. difficile PCR test instead – submit fresh, unformed stool, order as Urgent, for the purpose of printing.
• **For other stool tests:**
  ♦ **INPATIENTS and OUTPATIENTS:**
  ⇒ **A fresh sample is needed for the following tests.** Collect the sample in a clean, dry container and bring to the lab **within 30 minutes** or **keep refrigerated.** Approximately one tablespoon of stool for is needed for **each test:** Rotavirus, Qualitative Fat or Reducing Substances.

**How to Do It (Collect and Preserve Stool specimens in Preservative kits)**

• Collect stool in a clean, dry container, or on plastic wrap stretched across the toilet.
• **Make sure the sample does not mix with water or urine.**
• Fresh specimens require 1-2 tablespoons of stool for each test ordered.
• Fill each collection tube (if used) so the sample raises the level of the liquid to the red line. When using the kits, include bloody or liquid portions of stool sample.
• **Mix the collection tubes well** (separate bowel movements may be combined to fill to line).
• Mark the box on the collection tube which best describes the sample appearance or shape.
• Make sure all containers are labeled properly with patient name, birth date, date and time of collection.

**Where to Take It**

Transport to University of Colorado Health Laboratories within 30 minutes if fresh, or within 72 hours if in special collection kits (refer to special specimen requirements for *C. difficile* testing).

**More Details**

• **Diapers are not accepted!** If diapers are used to collect a stool specimen: Line diaper with plastic wrap so stool does not soak into or contact the diaper and transfer the specimen to clean dry well sealed container.
  OR
  Use a urine collection bag to collect the stool sample (this will also keep out urine).
• If there are multiple orders for the same test(s), wait 24 to 48 hours between stool sample collections for results of the first samples as well as to allow for better recovery of pathogens from different samples.
• **Clostridium difficile** testing **must** be performed on **fresh, liquid or soft** stool specimens only. Specimens are acceptable **up to 5 days** from the time of collection, if kept **refrigerated.** (Specimens may also be frozen if longer storage/transport time is needed). Only one test for *C. difficile* by PCR is needed. If new diarrheal illness occurs more than 7 days after a prior negative test a single repeat specimen may be indicated. Testing again within a few weeks after a positive result should **not** be used as “Test of Cure”.

**Patient History/Diagnosis**

• If there is a recent history of travel to coastal areas or a foreign country, include this information in comments on the requisition.
• Specify antibiotics and/or chemotherapy treatments.
• Note in comments, if patient has had bloody diarrhea in past few days.
• **Write special requests** for specific pathogens such as *Yersinia, Vibrio, Cryptosporidium,* and other unusual parasites on the requisition.