

Safe Sample Collection – a guide

"Successful laboratory diagnosis depends on the collection of specimens at the appropriate time, using the correct technique and equipment and transporting them to the designated laboratory safely without delay" Reference: Mallet, J and Dougherty L (2000) *The Royal Marsden Hospital Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures* 5th Edition. Blackwell Science.

To ensure successful laboratory diagnosis as defined above, there are several sequential processes

1. Identify the need for the test
2. Identify the laboratory that offers the test. See [Test catalogue](#)
3. Verify that the patient meets any pre-examination requirements (e.g. fasting etc.). See [Test catalogue](#) for any particular requirements
4. [Make an accurate request](#)
5. Take sample correctly
 - a. Any collection method requiring an invasive technique should be performed by a physician or a trained health care worker.
 - b. Explain and discuss the procedure with the patient and ensure privacy while the procedure is being carried out. This ensures that the patient understands the procedure and gives their consent.
 - c. Specimens must not be taken unless there is a request form for the investigation-Request forms must not be completed by the patient.
 - d. Specimens MUST be collected in containers approved by the laboratory. For this reason the laboratory supplies GP's and all Hospital units with specimen containers. Out-of-date sample bottles will be refused - please note expiry date of container before use.
 - e. Collect adequate amount of specimen in correct container (see [Test catalogue](#)) and detailed sample [collection instructions](#)
 - f. Dispose of all sharps and contaminated consumables in accordance with local policy
6. Clearly label specimen container, ensure request is completed (see Specimen labelling requirements).
7. [Pack sample safely](#)
8. Transport specimens promptly to the appropriate laboratory or store at appropriate temperature (see [Test catalogue](#)) until transport can be arranged. Delays in transport or storage in warm conditions may affect the results of some tests.