

Stool Specimen Collection Guide

Proper collection, handling, and storage for common stool specimen containers

Before You Begin: Your provider has ordered a stool (fecal) test. Please read this entire guide before collecting your sample. If you have questions about which container(s) to use, ask your care provider or a laboratory staff member.

- If possible, avoid antacids, bismuth, barium, mineral/castor oil, antidiarrheal medication, or laxatives for several days before collection unless your provider directs otherwise — these can interfere with results.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after collecting your specimen.
- Label every container with your full name, date of birth, and the date/time of collection.

GENERAL COLLECTION STEPS

1. Collect the stool using a disposable collection hat (specimen collection pan) placed under the toilet seat and resting on the rim of the toilet bowl. Do **not** collect the specimen directly from the toilet bowl.



Example: collection hat positioned under the toilet seat, resting on the bowl rim, before use.

2. Do **not** allow urine, toilet bowl water, soap, or disinfectant residue to mix with the stool sample — this can invalidate your results.
3. Using the scoop or applicator provided (built into the vial cap, or a separate wooden stick), transfer a sample of stool into the appropriate container(s) as instructed by your provider or the labels provided. Sample from areas that look bloody, slimy, or watery when present.
4. Tighten every cap securely and, for liquid-preservative vials, shake or invert gently until the contents are well mixed.
5. Label all containers with your name and date of birth. Place all filled, labeled containers into the specimen transport bag provided and return them to the laboratory according to the storage and timing instructions on the back of this guide.

COLLECTION CONTAINERS (AS APPLICABLE)



No Additive Container

Cap color varies by manufacturer (white, blue, or red)

Used for tests that require a fresh, unpreserved stool sample.

- Place approximately 2 tablespoons (walnut-sized amount) of stool directly into the container using the attached spoon or a clean applicator stick.
- Do not touch the inside of the cup or lid.
- Screw the cap on tightly.



Para-Pak® C&S (Cary-Blair Transport)

Orange cap

Enteric transport medium used to preserve bacteria for culture testing.

- Unscrew the orange cap; the attached spoon will come with it.
- Add stool until it reaches the red "fill line" printed on the vial — do not overfill or underfill.
- Recap tightly and shake until the sample is evenly mixed with the liquid.



Total-Fix™ Fixative

Black cap

A single-vial fixative used for ova & parasite exams and several fecal immunoassays.

- Unscrew the cap and use the attached spoon to add stool until the liquid reaches the fill line (a 3:1 fixative-to-sample ratio).
- Stir with the spoon, recap tightly, and shake until homogeneous.
- Allow at least 30 minutes for complete fixation before transport.



O&P Stool Transport (Parasitology)

Pink & gray caps

Paired vials (formalin and PVA) used together for Ova & Parasite examination.

- Using the built-in spoon, add stool to **both** vials until each reaches its fill line.
- Recap each vial and shake to mix thoroughly.
- If ordered "times 3," repeat with a new set on 3 alternating days.



Parasep® SF Transport Kit

Green cap, with scoop & sealable bag

A self-contained scoop-and-tube system used for parasite concentration/detection testing.

- Unscrew the lid; the scoop assembly is attached to the cap.
- Use the scoop to add two level scoops of stool (or one heaped scoop if solid) into the liquid-filled tube.
- Screw the scoop assembly back onto the tube as tightly as possible until it "clicks," then place the tube in the provided sealable bag (Bag A).

Questions? Ask your provider or care team.

STORAGE, TRANSPORT & STABILITY PARAMETERS

Once collected, keep every specimen container upright and deliver it to the laboratory or Patient Service Center as soon as possible. The table below summarizes the general storage temperature and maximum stability window *from the time of collection to the start of testing* for each container type. These are general manufacturer- and reference-based guidelines — always follow any test-specific instructions given by your provider or the laboratory.

Container	Preservative	Storage Temperature	Stability (Collection → Testing)	Special Notes
No Additive Container	None (unpreserved)	Refrigerate (2–8°C) if not delivered right away	Refrigerated: up to 24 hours Room temperature: process within 1 hour	Do not freeze. Deliver as soon as possible for best results.
Para-Pak® C&S (orange cap, Cary-Blair)	Cary-Blair transport medium	Room temperature (15–30°C) preferred; refrigerate only if transport is delayed	Up to 96 hours at room temperature	Do not freeze. Protects bacterial pathogens (e.g., <i>Salmonella</i> , <i>Shigella</i> , <i>Campylobacter</i>) from overgrowth or die-off.
Total-Fix™ Fixative (black cap)	Total-Fix fixative solution	Room temperature preferred (refrigeration also acceptable)	Ambient (15–25°C): 7 days Refrigerated (2–8°C): 7 days	Frozen storage is unacceptable — freezing destroys parasite morphology. Requires ≥30 minutes for complete fixation before transport.
O&P Stool Transport (pink & gray caps)	Formalin (pink) & PVA (gray)	Room temperature only	Up to 7 days at room temperature	Do not refrigerate or freeze. Both vials from a set must be submitted together.
Parasep® SF Kit (green cap)	Liquid fixative (e.g., AlcorFix™)	Room temperature only — keep upright	Up to 9 months at room temperature	Do not refrigerate or freeze. Keep the tube upright inside the sealable bag provided.

HANDLING REMINDERS

- Never overfill or underfill a liquid-preservative vial — using the printed fill line ensures the correct ratio of preservative to specimen for accurate results.
- Multiple containers for the same order (e.g., paired O&P vials, or repeat cultures collected on different days) must all be labeled and returned together unless instructed otherwise.
- If you are unsure which container(s) apply to your order, or if a vial is damaged, leaking, or past its expiration date, contact your care provider or the laboratory before collecting your sample.

⚠ Safety & Caution

Liquids in preservative vials (Cary-Blair, Total-Fix, Formalin, PVA, and AlcorFix/Parasep solutions) are **poisonous — do not drink**. Keep all containers out of the reach of children and pets. Avoid contact with skin, eyes, or mucous membranes; if contact occurs, flush thoroughly with water and seek medical attention. In case of accidental ingestion in the United States, contact the American Association of Poison Control Centers immediately at **(800) 222-1222**. Treat every specimen as a potential source of infection — wash your hands thoroughly after handling any container.