

# Self-Collected Vulvovaginal Swab (VVS)

Information for  
patients

*Please read all instructions before collecting specimens.  
If you have any questions about this procedure, please  
ask your doctor or nurse.*



Abdominal Medicine  
and Surgery

## **Why have I been asked to do a vaginal swab?**

As part of the diagnostic work up for women aged 16 to 44 presenting with abdominal pain we are offering STI (chlamydia and gonorrhoea) testing to consider pelvic inflammatory disease as a cause for your symptoms.

## **What is pelvic inflammatory disease?**

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of the female upper genital tract, including the womb, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Women can have vague symptoms that may include abdominal/pelvic pain, bleeding between periods, painful sex and/or unusual vaginal discharge. Most cases of PID are caused by a bacterial infection that's spread from the vagina to the reproductive organs higher up. In many cases it's caused by a sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea.

## **What are chlamydia and gonorrhoea?**

Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea are the two most common bacterial sexually transmitted infections in the UK (passed from one person to another through sex). If found and treated early with antibiotics, they shouldn't cause problems. However, if left untreated they can cause serious problems; for women these include infertility (difficulty becoming pregnant), ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube) and low abdominal pain from pelvic inflammatory disease. In men, these infections can cause epididymo-orchitis (painful, swollen testicles).

## What will the swab test for?

This vulvovaginal swab (VVS) will only test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. This swab will not test for thrush, bacterial vaginosis and/or any other sexually transmitted infections. If you have other symptoms such as vaginal discharge, abnormal vaginal bleeding, painful periods or pain during sex we recommend you attend Leeds Sexual Health or consult your GP.

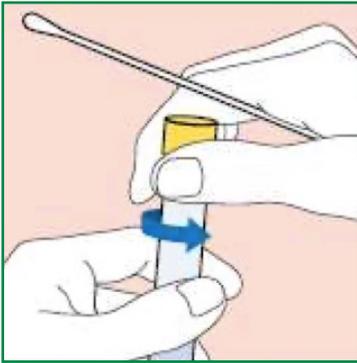
There is a two week window period for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. This means that any infection you may have picked up through sex in the last two weeks will not be detected. If you are testing because of a specific sexual encounter we would recommend getting re-tested at your local sexual health service in two weeks time.

**Contact Leeds Sexual Health on 0113 392 0333 or visit [www.leedssexualhealth.com](http://www.leedssexualhealth.com)**

## Instructions on how to perform the test

**Wash your hands before you begin.**

Open your pack. You will find a swab stick and plaster container. Twist the cap of the plastic container to open it and place it on a flat surface. Make sure not to place the swab directly on any surface.

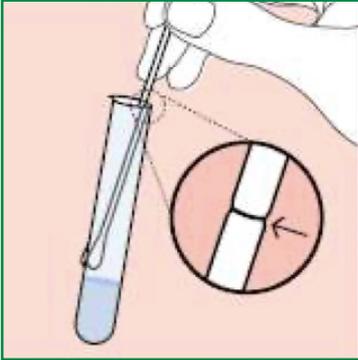


Take the swab stick out of its packet and hold the plastic shaft in the midline.



Hold the swab with the tip facing upwards with one hand. With the other hand gently spread the skin outside the vagina and insert the swab no more than 2cm into the vaginal opening. Gently rotate the swab against the wall of the vagina for 10 seconds.

Remove the swab and place it back in the container. Make sure to not spill any of the liquid.



Snap the stick off at the marked black line and screw back on the container tightly.

**\* The swabs being used are Hologic Aptima. Please rub the cotton swab over the entrance to wear you pass urine (as shown by the yellow arrow and star)**

## What will happen to my swab results?

Your swab result will be recorded on your PPM+ health record. This means that the result can be seen by the doctors and nurses looking after you and your GP.

If you test **POSITIVE** you will receive a letter in the post within 10-14 days of your self collected swab. As well as receiving a letter, your details will be passed to Leeds Sexual Health who will contact you to offer treatment, a full sexual health screen and testing +/- treatment for your partners. They will contact you by phone initially and letter if they cannot get through to you by phone.

If you test **NEGATIVE** you will not receive a letter in the post. You can assume your test was negative if you do not hear anything from us within four weeks of your self collected swab. However if you are concerned that you may be at risk of a sexually transmitted infection we would recommend visiting [leedssexualhealth.com](http://leedssexualhealth.com) for further advice & guidance.

**Contact Leeds Sexual Health on 0113 392 0333 or visit [www.leedssexualhealth.com](http://www.leedssexualhealth.com)**

### **Please note that by agreeing to do a swab you are agreeing to:**

- having your test result recorded on PPM which is your hospital record.
- to have your details including your name, mobile number, address and result shared with Leeds Sexual Health for assessment and treatment
- that if your swab is positive for Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea, that we can send a letter home to you giving you this result.

**If you have any concerns of the above please speak to one of the available nurse/doctors.**





## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

*Your views matter*



© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 1st edition (Ver 1)  
Developed by: Helen Please, Junior Clinical Fellow  
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services • MID code: 20210923\_011/BP

LN005123  
Publication date  
10/2021  
Review date  
10/2023