

SECTION 6:

PROCEDURES FOR HPV TEST SAMPLE COLLECTION AND SHIPMENT TO THE LABORATORY

KEY MESSAGES

- Once a sample is taken for HPV testing, it will generally require transportation to the laboratory for testing.
- The quality of the test results will depend on the quality of the sample taken.
- Health workers, therefore, need proper training on how to take the HPV test sample, as well as the procedures for transporting the sample to the laboratory.
- HPV tests have expiration dates and can be sensitive to temperature changes. Therefore, attention is needed to use the tests within the date, as well as to ensure proper storage and transportation.

PROCEDURE FOR SAMPLE COLLECTION FOR HPV TESTING

HPV testing can be performed in any health facility that has the appropriately trained health providers and necessary supplies and equipment. Sample collection for HPV testing is typically performed during a gynecological examination, where the health worker, after inserting the speculum, removes a sample of cervical cells using a specially designed brush. During sample collection, it is important to ensure the woman's privacy and to promote mutual trust and minimize the fear and embarrassment this test might cause.

Depending on the type of HPV test used, the sample is then placed in a collection tube that contains a liquid transport medium. The tube should be properly labeled with the person's first and last names and a personal identification number. The tube is then sent, in a timely and secure manner, for analysis to a molecular biology laboratory that has the capacity to process the HPV test. Samples need to be sent to the laboratory in less than 14 days following collection, to avoid having to be discarded. Coordination is vitally important between the health facilities, where specimens are collected, and the laboratory where the tests are processed.

The following describes the steps for taking a sample for HPV testing:

Preparation

1. Explain HPV testing to the woman and the meaning of results. Make sure that the woman has understood the explanation.
2. Perform a gynecological examination.

Sample collection

3. Obtain a sample from the cervix with the brush or swab, following the instructions corresponding to the type of collecting device.
4. Place the brush or swab in the collection tube with the preservative solution.
5. Close and gently remove the speculum.
6. Place used instruments in a decontamination solution.
7. Label the collection tube with the woman's first and last names, personal identification number, and the date.

After obtaining the sample

8. In the patient's chart, write that the HPV test sample was taken, and any observations during the gynecological exam.
9. Instruct the woman about when to return to receive her test results.

Storage and transport of HPV test samples

This is an example of the procedures for storage and transportation of HPV test samples, but always refer to, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for the specific product used.

Storing and transportation of collection tubes:

- Store collection tubes at room temperature (15-30 °C).
- Transport to the laboratory does not require refrigeration.
- The tubes can be preserved for 2-3 weeks at room temperature.
- In the laboratory, samples can be preserved for up to one additional week at 4 °C and up to 3 months at -20 °C.
- Do not use the test after the indicated expiration date.