

Campylobacter Culture (Stool)



Does this test have other names?

Stool sample exam, fecal (poop) smear

What is this test?

This test looks for harmful bacteria in a culture sample from a bowel movement (stool).

One kind of harmful bacteria is Campylobacter. It is a leading cause of foodborne illness in the U.S. Campylobacter shows up in the stomach of several animals, including pigs and cattle. But it's most likely to be passed to people through raw and undercooked chicken and other poultry. In some cases, people have become infected through unpasteurized milk and city water supplies contaminated with Campylobacter.

The infection usually runs its course in about a week without any treatment. Other infections may develop, though. They include:

- Meningitis
- Inflammation of the joints
- Urinary tract infection

In some patients, Campylobacter infection may also lead to Guillain-Barré syndrome. This is a nerve disease. It can cause temporary paralysis that often starts in your legs or back.

This test can tell your healthcare provider whether you have Campylobacter or a different type of harmful bacteria in your digestive tract.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your healthcare provider thinks you have food poisoning or a digestive tract infection. Symptoms appear several days after you've come in contact with the bacteria. They include:

- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (belly) pain
- Stomach cramping
- Bloody diarrhea

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Normal results are negative. This means no Campylobacter bacteria were found in your stool.

A positive result means that the bacteria were found. You may have a Campylobacter infection.

How is this test done?

This test needs a sample of your stool. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to collect and deliver the sample. If you aren't able to give a stool sample, your provider may take the sample by putting a swab into your rectum.

What might affect my test results?

Timing is important. If you've been in the hospital for more than 3 days, your results may not be accurate. Contaminating the sample with urine or toilet paper can affect your results.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to prepare for this test. Be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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