

Stool Culture



Does this test have other names?

Stool test, stool sample

What is this test?

This test looks for bacteria, viruses, and other germs in your stool. This test can help find out what's causing a digestive tract infection.

For this test, your stool sample is put in a special container with the nutrients that bacteria or other germs need to grow. The lab waits until enough germs are present to be seen under a microscope. Once your healthcare provider knows the type of germ causing your infection, the provider can diagnose and treat your illness.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your healthcare provider suspects that you have a digestive tract infection. Symptoms may include:

- High fever
- Stools that have blood or mucus in them
- Severe stomach pain or cramping
- Severe diarrhea or diarrhea that lasts more than a few days
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite

These symptoms are often caused by food poisoning. You can get food poisoning by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated with bacteria, parasites, viruses, or other germs.

You may also need this test if you have immune problems or if your white blood cell count is high. This is a sign that your body is trying to fight off an infection.

You may also need this test if you've traveled to a region where clean water is unavailable and you have symptoms of a parasitic infection. You may also need this test if you have diarrhea that doesn't go away with treatment.

You may also need this test if you have taken broad-spectrum antibiotics or if you are an older adult. These factors can make it more likely that you will pick up a dangerous strain of bacteria, such as *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff).

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider may also order other tests to help find the bacteria or viruses causing your infection. These tests include:

- Gram stain
- Other stool tests
- Loeffler methylene blue stain

- Blood culture
- Blood tests. These include a complete blood count, serum electrolytes, blood urea nitrogen, or creatinine test.
- C. diff test

Your healthcare provider may also order tests to help rule out other conditions like a urinary tract infection or appendicitis. These tests include:

- Viral antigen stool test
- Urine culture
- Abdominal ultrasound
- Abdominal CT
- Contrast enema X-ray

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 that no abnormal bacteria or other organisms were found in your stool culture and that you don't have an infection.

Positive results mean bacteria, parasites, or other abnormal organisms were found in your stool culture. They may be causing your infection.

Sometimes the test shows a false-negative result. This means the test missed certain infectious bacteria. If you still have symptoms of infection, your healthcare provider may order other tests to find out the cause of your problems.

How is this test done?

This test is done with a stool sample. Your healthcare provider or a staff member from the lab will tell you how to collect a sample in a disposable specimen container with a lid. More than 1 specimen may be needed. Don't collect stool material from the toilet bowl or put toilet paper or urinate into the specimen container. Wear rubber or latex gloves when collecting the sample. Be sure to wash your hands well when you are done.

Does this test pose any risks?

This test poses no known risks.

What might affect my test results?

Taking certain types of medicine may affect your results. These medicines include antibiotics, medicines for diarrhea, enemas, and laxatives.

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 take. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.