

Guide to Sample Collections

On Arrival

Before any sample collection can take place, we must be able to identify the donor. Our Collection Technician will need to see some identification to ensure we are collecting the sample from the correct person. We understand that some donors may not possess photographic identification, as such their identification can be verified by a solicitor, social worker, or the witness (if present). The identity of a child/children should be verified by the person/ party who has parental responsibility.

Chain of Custody Procedure

All samples are collected under strict chain of custody procedures to ensure the result is legally defensible for use in court. With a strict chain of custody procedure in place, we ensure integrity of samples from the time of collection. This means donors will be required to provide a signature, thus consenting to the sample analysis and will be asked for a photograph to be taken at the time of the sample collection. A clear, face on photograph must also be taken regardless of how the donor is identified, donor permission permitting. This photograph will be used as ID and will be included within the Expert Report. Each sample collected has its own unique reference number which will only pertain to the donor from whom the sample was collected from. This provides a further unique demographic in addition to the donor's name, DOB etc and is referenced in the Expert Report.

Declaring Medication, Substances and Alcohol

It's helpful to prepare a list of any medication the donor is taking so that these can be declared at the time of the sample collection. This ensures that any prescribed medication is taken into consideration when interpreting the analysis results and is included in the Expert Report. If alcohol testing is requested, the donor will be asked to state their approximate alcohol consumption in a typical week. If drugs testing is requested, the donor will be asked to state any substances they have used.



Hair Sample Collection

Prior to the collection

It's important to ensure that there are no hair products left on the hair such as hair gel, hairspray, oils etc. as it makes it easier for the Collection Technician to obtain a sample with minimum discomfort.

Prior to the sample collection, if hair extensions are worn, they will need to be removed. In addition, if the hair is worn in a plaited or braided hairstyle, these should be undone.

Collection

If a scalp hair sample is taken, our Collection Technician will section the hair and cut two samples of hair near to the scalp, ideally this should be from the posterior vertex (crown.) The collection of a scalp hair sample unavoidably leaves a patch of removed hair on the scalp, as such, our collectors are sensitive to the donor's appearance and attempt to

collect sufficient hair for the analysis whilst minimising the cosmetic impact. The hair is cut with scissors and not shaved. Usually, our Collection Technician will take approximately a pencil width of hair, however there are cases where more hair may be needed as the weight and texture of hair varies from one individual to another. If the hair is being tested for Spice, psychoactive substances, or steroids, then more samples may need to be collected.

If there is little or no scalp hair, our Collection Technician can take a body hair sample, the sample sites will vary depending on what we are testing. For alcohol analysis a sample can be taken from the chest or the leg/forearm. For drug analysis hair can be taken from the underarm, chest, legs, arms, or beard.



Nail Sample Collection

Prior to the collection

We can only collect natural untreated nails, this means the nails must be free of gel, acrylic, etc. If the donor has nail polish on, they may remove it and then wash their hands. The collector will check if the donor has diabetes or any peripheral arterial disease. We can still carry out a collection if the donor has these medical conditions, but it must be a fingernail sample. Improper cutting of toenails in people with these conditions can be unsafe.

Collection

The collector will sanitise the nail clippers with an alco wipe, placing the equipment into a clean tray ready for use. The donor will be cutting their own nails, under the strict supervision of the collector. The ideal width of a nail cutting is 2-3mm (approx. the thickness of a £2 coin). The same advice applies to both finger and toenails. The donor may find it beneficial to cut halfway across the nail, then pull the rest of the nail off to avoid 'pinging off'. It will avoid the nail landing on anything other than the 'clean' area. Each clipping will be placed into a prepared foil. One foil should be used per nail type – fingernail and toenail clippings cannot be combined. The nail clippers are single-use and will be disposed of at the point of collection into a sharps bin, for peace of mind (with regards to hygiene and cross contamination)



Blood Sample Collection

It's important to note that we offer three types of blood test. These are a Liver Function Test, known as LFT, Carbohydrate Deficient Transferrin known as CDT and Phosphatidylethanol known as PEth.

Prior to the Collection

Prior to a blood sample collection, it is recommended that the donor drinks plenty of water. Drinking water before a blood test makes it easier to extract a sample, so more comfortable for the donor.

Collection

The Collection technician will take a blood sample using a vacutainer needle, which is inserted into the vein and then used to draw out a sample of blood. The blood sample will be collected from the forearm (antecubital fossa) or the back of the hand (metacarpal veins.) There may be a small feeling of pricking or scratching as the needle goes in, but it shouldn't be painful. A small bruise *may* appear after the blood collection, this is usually harmless and shouldn't require treatment.



DNA Sample Collection

Prior to the Collection

We recommend that the donor does not eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum for 30 minutes prior to giving a DNA sample.

Collection

In order to obtain an oral fluid sample for a DNA test the Collection Technician will need to take two swabs of the inside of the cheeks, near the back teeth, per donor.