



## Intimate Searches in Police Custody

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An Intimate Search is a physical examination of body orifices other than mouth and could therefore include the ear, nose, rectum or vagina.

**It requires the authority of an inspector or above, the detainee is arrested, in police detention and:**

**(a)** May have concealed anything that could be used to cause physical injury to him/others or might be used whilst in detention.

or

**(b)** Class A drug concealed and had appropriate criminal intent.

**And cannot be found without an intimate search.**

Police officers can carry out an intimate search in **(a)** without consent.

Police officers cannot carry out an intimate search in **(b)** with or without consent.

**A doctor or other healthcare professional can carry out an intimate search in (a) & (b) but needs valid and informed consent to do so.**

Intimate searches in **(a)** can be carried out in a police station.

Intimate searches in **(b)** must be carried out in a medical facility ideally a hospital with resuscitation facilities.  
An X-ray or ultrasound can also be authorised in **(b)** and requires written consent.

### A doctor needs to

- Ensure that any urgent therapeutic interventions are prioritized
- Ensure and document that proper authorisation has been obtained
- Ensure that the detainee is fully aware of the risks of the search, the risk of not carrying out the search, the possibility that a police officer may carry out the search in certain cases and the fact that refusal may imply guilt
- If consent is refused no further action in respect of the search should be carried out
- If consent is agreed then the search should take place as detailed above
- A local protocol between the police and local A&E Department should be available to facilitate this
- As sharp objects may be concealed in the rectum or vagina, consideration should be given to undertaking a proctoscopy or speculum examination before a digital examination.

Police sometimes attempt to argue that a Class A drug could be used to cause harm and that an intimate search under **(a)** could be authorised and carried out by an officer or doctor without consent. **THIS IS NOT THE CASE and doctors should explain why and refuse.**

For more detailed guidance please see the FFLM/BMA document *Recommendations for Healthcare Professionals asked to perform intimate body searches.*