Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine

Recommended equipment for obtaining forensic samples from complainants and suspects

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General Guidance[1]

- The individuals taking samples and handling modules must wear double gloves throughout the whole procedure. Change outer gloves when sampling different body areas.
- The examiner should wear disposable barrier clothing to minimise the risk of contamination. This barrier clothing should cover exposed skin and the examiner's own clothing thereby minimising the transfer of DNA/other evidence.
- Cleaning of the area/equipment (as appropriate) to be used for the examination, e.g., couch, table, etc. should be carried out using a suitable cleaning agent that has been validated. The Forensic Capability Network (FCN) has a cleaning validation report available in its knowledge hub.
- Cleaning agents used to clean the forensic rooms will need to be validated, ensuring that DNA is sufficiently removed. There will need to be a period of environmental monitoring within the facility to verify that the cleaning agent and cleaning process is fit for purpose.
- A disposable, single use, couch cover should be used. For those who conduct examinations with patients in lithotomy position there should be covers for the leg/feet supports.
- Single use consumables should be used and where this is not possible equipment should be decontaminated between each examination, e.g. colposcope.
- The examiner should complete the *FME form* (complainant or suspect as appropriate) (or equivalent) regarding the samples and exhibit with any samples taken.
- Swabs with wooden shafts **must not** be introduced into any orifice.
- Each modular kit should have specific instructions.
- There should be a pre-printed sheet of relevant swab labels.
- There should be access to the latest *FFLM Recommendations for the Collection of Forensic Specimens from Complainants and Suspects*.
- Use of kit modules should reduce overall cost and reduce risk of contamination. The outer packaging of each kit should be a tamper evident bag.
- The kit should be ISO18385 Forensic DNA Grade (FDG) when being used to retrieve DNA.
- Equipment to reduce DNA contamination will be required if forensic samples are taken off-site (that is not in a purpose built forensic medical examination room in custody or a sexual assault referral centre) in, e.g. hospitals, care homes, etc.
- **The following kits should be available (as appropriate)** (*National Kit list on FFLM website*):
  - Mouth collection kit
  - Standard swab kit
  - Vaginal swab kit
  - Anal swab kit
  - Penile swab kit
  - Hand swab kit
  - Mons pubis kit
  - Hair collection kit
  - Drug hair testing kit
  - Fingernail swab kit
  - Fingernail clipping kit
  - Couch cover kit
  - Clothing kit
  - Condom collection kit
  - Sanitary wear collection kit
  - Alcohol and Drug blood collection kit
  - Alcohol/Drug urine collection kit
  - Paediatric (infant) swab collection kit
  - Paediatric (child) swab collection kit
  - Early Evidence Kit

Once opened, the remaining unused contents of any module/kit should be discarded.

1. Examinee clothing

The specifications for an examinee's gown (FDG) are:

- unisex
- not transparent
- loose or short sleeves, i.e. not elasticated
- non-shedding
- soft, with tie to close at neck and around middle
- various sizes suitable for size of examinee.

If this needs to be exhibited, it should be placed in a tamper-evident **bag**.

Sheet for examinee to stand on when undressing

- 'Sterile' white paper sheet at least 90cm by 90cm (FDG)
- Tamper-evident bag

2. Equipment cover kit

Single use colposcope cover.

3. Couch cover

The specifications for a couch cover are:

- adjustable so appropriate size for couch (FDG)
- white
- single use.

4. Modesty Blanket

- FDG

5. Swab kits

At present, the Forensic Science Subcommittee is not able to recommend a particular composition of swab, however, swabs should have rounded heads and plastic shafts.

- Standard swabs (FDG)
- 5ml sterile water (FDG)
- Pre-printed labels
- Tamper evident bags

Different kits may be prepared with pre-labelled swabs (FDG):

- Standard x6 or x12
- Vaginal (FDG): mons pubis x2, vulval x2, low vaginal x2, high vaginal x2, endocervical x2, perianal x2
- Anal (FDG): perianal x2, anal canal x2, rectal x2
- Right hand (FDG): x2
- Left hand (FDG): x2
- Penile (FDG): shaft x2; coronal sulcus, internal foreskin and glans x2
- Mons pubis (FDG) x2

6. Blood

NB For RTA cases a RTA blood kit must be used. For all other cases for toxicology the following applies:

- Single use, disposable tourniquets should be used
- Evacuated blood collection system or alternative safe collection system to allow collection of a total of 10ml of blood into **glass** vials with appropriate amount of sodium fluoride and potassium oxalate preservative.
- Safety needle/butterfly in various gauges, e.g. 21G, 23G; for use with evacuated blood collection system
- Needle holder for use with evacuated blood collection system
- Alcohol-free skin cleansing tissue
- One/two ball(s) of cotton wool
- Small plaster
- Suitable tamper-evident protective outer packaging/rigid container with padding to prevent bottle movement within container
- Pre-printed labels
- Tamper-evident bag x1
- See: *Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013*

7. Urine

NB For RTA cases a RTA urine kit must be used

(2 x urine collection vials to be available per examinee, e.g. in cases of drug facilitated crime)

- Wide brim collection vessel x1
- **Glass** bottle to collect 20ml urine from the collection vessel with appropriate amount of sodium fluoride preservative x1
- Suitable tamper-evident protective outer packaging/rigid container with padding to prevent bottle movement within container
- Pre-printed labels
- Where available, toilet tissue (FDG) to be retained after wiping and frozen
- Exhibit toilet tissue separately to urine sample
- Tamper-evident bag x2

8. Mouth collection kit

- Standard swab(s) (FDG) (plastic shaft) x4 (perioral x2 and mouth x2)
- Sterile water (FDG) – single container of 10ml and single container of 5ml
- Wide-mouthed, sealable plastic pot (FDG) to collect mouth washings x1
- Gloves for examinee to hold pot x1 pair
- Tamper-evident bags as required

9. Fingernail Swabbing and Clippings Kits

NB Specialised kits required to collect nails for toxicology. See: *Recommendations for collecting nail clippings for toxicology*

- Taper-tipped mini swabs (FDG) x4
- 5ml water (FDG) x1
- Nail clippers (FDG) that retain the clippings x2
- White paper sheet 50cm by 50cm (FDG)
- Tamper-evident bags as required

10. Hair collection kit

NB Specialised kits required to collect hair for toxicology.
See: *Recommendations for collecting hair samples for toxicology*

- Comb (FDG) with medium spacing between teeth (i.e. not a nit comb) x1
- Disposable forceps (FDG) x1
- White paper sheet 50cm by 50cm (FDG) x3
- Scissors (FDG) x 1
- Tamper-evident bags as required
- Low-adhesive clear tape available from Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs)
- Afro Combs (FDG) are available as a separate item

11. Gloves

- Non-sterile powder free, non-latex, single-use gloves, e.g., nitrile – of various sizes
- Complying with appropriate quality standards to address medical grade (e.g., EN455) and PPE (e.g. EN374) requirements.

12. Lubricant

Several commercial lubricants are available, specify the brand of lubricant used and the batch number on the FME form.

The lubricant **MUST** conform with the requirements of ISO 18385/PAS 377.

13. Vaginal specula and proctoscopes

- Various sizes of both to be available in the examination suites
- Single use
- Clear plastic
- Disposable (FDG)

14. Firearm discharge residue (FDR) sampling

- Refer to local guidelines
- Specific FDR Kits are available

15. Condom collection kit

- Opaque containers (FDG)
- Plastic clip (FDG)
- Forceps (FDG)
- Pre-printed label
- Tamper-evident bag

16. Sanitary wear/nappy module/ products of conception

- Opaque containers (FDG)
- Pre-printed label to indicate tampon/panty-liner/sanitary towel/nappy
- Tamper-evident bag

17. Early evidence kit

- Contents to include equipment for two urine samples (urine and tissue), a mouth collection kit, and a standard swabbing kit (6). Separately there should be access to a fingernail swabbing kit as above.

18. Paediatric swab collection kit

- Gown
- Butterfly infusion set
- Couch cover
- Colposcope cover
- Paediatric urine pouch
- Swabs x10 (FDG)
- Tamper evident bags x5

References

Forensic Science Regulator Guidance

DNA contamination controls – Forensic medical examinations FSR-GUI-0017
January 2024

Forensic medical examination of sexual offence complainants FSR-GUI-0020
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FFLM Guidance

Operational procedures and equipment for clinical and forensic examination rooms in police stations

Operational procedures and equipment for forensic medical examination rooms in Sexual Assault Referral Centres

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