
Department of Genitourinary Medicine

Swabs

The following swab (cotton wool/soft foam) samples may be taken today, although exactly which samples are obtained will vary between patients according to individual symptoms and concerns.

Vaginal swabs for:

- **Candida (Thrush):** This is a common cause of vulval and vaginal irritation or soreness, or increased discharge. Sometimes Candida may be present in the vagina without symptoms, in which case no treatment is usually recommended. The condition is not acquired through sexual intercourse.
- **Bacterial vaginosis:** This causes an increased vaginal discharge, often with a slightly fishy odour, although as with 'thrush', it may be present without symptoms. We are not sure why bacterial vaginosis develops but it is thought not to be acquired through sexual intercourse.
- **Trichomonas vaginalis:** This usually causes a yellow vaginal discharge, sometimes associated with discomfort on passing urine. The infection is most commonly acquired through sexual intercourse.

Cervical swabs for:

- **Chlamydia:** This is a common bacterial infection which can cause an inflammation of the cervix (neck of the womb) and urethra (water passage). Women with chlamydia may notice an increased vaginal discharge, pain on passing urine or, commonly, may have no symptoms. Chlamydia is easily treated with antibiotics and as it is acquired through sexual intercourse, sexual partners should be assessed and treated.
- **Neisseria gonorrhoeae:** This is an uncommon bacterial infection usually causing an inflammation of the cervix. Although this may produce an increased discharge, the infection is often carried without symptoms. It is acquired through sexual intercourse and, therefore, sexual partners should be assessed and treated.

Urethral swabs for:

- **Neisseria gonorrhoeae** – as above

Results of your swab

- Some of the samples taken today may be examined under the microscope in the clinic. We are therefore able to give you these results within the next 30-60 minutes. These include tests for Bacterial vaginosis, Candida (thrush), Trichomonas vaginalis and Neisseria gonorrhoeae.
- All samples are also sent to the main hospital laboratory for further testing. We will let you know if these show an infection. These may include tests for Candida, Trichomonas vaginalis, Chlamydia and Neisseria gonorrhoeae.

Other possible tests that may be carried out

A **cervical smear** may be taken if one is due although we usually recommend that you arrange this with your GP.

A blood sample may also be taken to check for HIV and **syphilis**. Syphilis is an uncommon infection nowadays but is still routinely checked for in anti-natal clinics and at blood transfusion centres.

We will provide you today with any treatment you may need.

Please ask one of the clinic nurses or doctors if you have any questions about the tests we perform today.



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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