



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Instructions for Collecting and Shipping HLA Samples Using Cheek Swabs

This information explains how to collect and send human leukocyte antigen (HLA) samples.

HLA is the typing that is used to determine whether or not you can be a donor for someone who needs a hematopoietic (blood forming cells) stem cell transplant. This typing is done on both the person needing a transplant and the person who may be the stem cell donor.

After you send your HLA samples to Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK), they will be tested to see if you can donate stem cells to the patient.

The HLA Testing Kit

MSK provides 1 HLA testing kit for each donor. If you're sending your HLA samples, you're the donor. If you're helping someone else send their samples, they're the donor.

Each kit has the following supplies:

- 2 packets of sterile cotton swabs. There are 2 swabs in each packet. Use all 4 swabs.
- 1 sterile plastic shipping tube (black top tube)
- 1 pre-printed label with the donor's legal name and date of birth
- 1 label with spaces to write the sample collection date and time
- 1 pre-paid, padded UPS return envelope

The UPS return envelope will be pre-addressed with the following address:

Center for Laboratory Medicine
Attn: Yevgeniya Bensman - Specimen Logistics 1st Floor
327 East 64th Street
New York, NY 10065

Collecting the HLA Samples

Wait about 1 to 2 hours after eating or drinking before collecting HLA samples.

1. Using 2 cotton swabs, rub the inside of one cheek about 10 times. You can use 2 swabs at once, or you can use them one after the other.
2. Using the remaining 2 cotton swabs, rub the inside of your other cheek about 10 times.
3. Rest the swabs on the outside of the black top tube (see Figure 1). Let the swabs air dry for at least 2 to 3 hours. Keep them in a safe place. If the swabs aren't completely dry before they're put in the black top tube, they may develop mold. If this happens, they can't be used for testing.

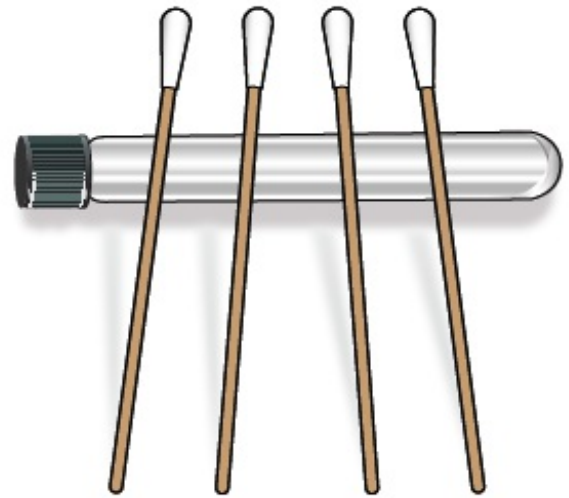


Figure 1. Swabs drying on test tube

Sending the HLA Samples

1. Place all 4 swabs inside the black top tube. Close the top of the tube.
2. Check the pre-printed label to make sure the donor's name and date of birth are correct.
 - If any of the information is incorrect, cross out the incorrect information and write the correct information on the label. Please print clearly.

3. Write the date and time the sample was collected directly on the other label. Please print clearly. **If you don't include the date and time the sample was collected, there may be a delay in processing your samples.**
4. Attach both labels to the outside of the tube. Make sure they don't overlap. **If both labels aren't attached to the tube when it's received, MSK won't be able to process your sample and a new sample will need to be collected.**
5. Put the labeled black top tube into the return envelope. Before sealing the envelope, check the following things:
 - There are 4 cotton swabs in the black top tube.
 - The black top tube has 2 labels.
 - The information on the labels is correct.
 - The date and time the sample was collected is written in the spaces on the label.

After you've checked these things, seal the envelope.

6. Bring the return envelope to a UPS drop off location. You can find the location closest to you by visiting www.ups.com/dropoff.
 - The return envelope will have a tracking number listed on the shipping label. MSK will use this to track your package. If you also want to track the envelope, write down the tracking number before giving the envelope to UPS.

Additional Information

- Don't put more than 1 black top tube in the envelope. If more than 1 donor is sending samples, they will each get their own HLA test kit. Each donor must send back their sample using the return envelope included in their own kit.
- All samples must be received and processed by MSK.

If your HLA test kit is damaged, your kit is missing items, or you have questions, please call us.

- If the patient is age 18 or older, call the Adult Stem Cell Transplant Related Donor Office at 646-608-4134.
- If the patient is younger than 18, call Pediatric Stem Cell Transplant Related Donor Office at 212-639-8478.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Instructions for Collecting and Shipping HLA Samples Using Cheek Swabs - Last updated on January 4, 2023

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center