



# Food safety advice

## FOOD POISONING INVESTIGATIONS - SPECIMENS

If you think you have eaten something that has made you ill or if you have a close family contact who has had a serious illness such as typhoid or E coli, your doctor or an officer from the Food and Safety Team may ask you to provide a faecal specimen for testing by the local Public Health Laboratory.

The lab will test for several food poisoning bacteria that could have made you ill or that you may have picked up but have no symptoms. The result may help the doctor treat your symptoms and may help the Food and Safety Team identify the food, or source of food that has made you ill. It will also show if you have to stay away from a high risk job such as food handling, nursing or if children should stay away from nursery

### Methods of Collection of a Specimen of Faeces (Poo/Motion/Stool Specimen):

We are often asked how to get a specimen of diarrhoea or faeces into such a little container!! - here is some advice to help you.

1. In cases of severe liquid diarrhoea use a clean disposable container that has been very well washed with very hot water. Pass the diarrhoea into the container then take enough spoonfuls with the spoon attached to the lid or with a clean disposable spoon **to fill the pot to half full**. Carefully screw the lid on, with the spoon inside.
2. If the stool is not too loose there is an easier method of collection. Sitting over the toilet, take a piece of toilet paper, and collect on it a sample of faeces as it leaves the body. With the little spoon provided, take enough to half fill the pot. Carefully screw the lid back on with the spoon inside the half filled container.
3. When specimens from more than one member of the household are required the collecting container must be washed and scalded with boiling water or disinfected after each use to prevent contamination of the next sample. Do not allow any disinfectant or bleach to come into contact with a sample.

### WASH YOUR HANDS WELL AFTER COLLECTING THE SPECIMEN

4. Write your full name and date of birth on the pot label and place the pot in the container provided, place container into the box. Put the box and paperwork in the plastic envelope provided, check stamps, seal shut and place in the post box.

**THE POT MUST BE HALF FULL BUT PLEASE DO NOT OVERFILL THE BOTTLE.**

