Self-Collected Vaginal Swabs

A self-collected vaginal swab is one way to test for Chlamydia trachomatis and Neisseria gonorrhoeae infection. This handout explains how to do a vaginal swab. If you have questions about the self-collected vaginal swab, or other collection options, talk to your provider. Tell your provider if you are pregnant, have abdominal pain, pain during sexual intercourse, or unusual vaginal discharge.

Instructions
1. Check the container to make sure it is labeled with your full name.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry your hands with a paper towel or let them air dry.
3. Undress to expose the vaginal area and get in a comfortable position.
4. Take the swab out of the package and do not touch the tip of the swab to any surface (if your kit has 2 swabs, throw one away).
   NOTE: Do not get the contents of tube on your skin or in your eyes. If contact occurs, wash your skin or flush your eyes with water right away and call your provider if irritation occurs.
5. Hold the swab at the black line.
6. Use one hand to hold the swab and one hand to pull apart the folds of skin (labia) around the vaginal opening.
7. Place the swab into the vagina about 2 inches. Gently rotate it against the vaginal wall for 10-30 seconds.
8. Remove the swab carefully. Do not touch the swab to any surface.
9. While holding the swab with one hand, take the screw cap off the container with the other hand. Be careful not to spill the contents of the tube. If the contents are spilled, ask for a new kit from your provider.
10. Put the cotton swab into the container and line up the black line with the tube rim. Break off the stick at the black line.
11. Tightly screw the cap on the container.
12. Wash your hands after collection and then hand the container to staff or leave in room as directed.
13. See the back side of this sheet for a step by step picture.
Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©2018. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8028.