



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Instructions for Collecting and Returning HLA Samples Using Cheek Swabs

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

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

Each kit has these supplies:

- 2 packets of sterile cotton swabs. There are 2 swabs in each packet. Use all 4 swabs.
- 1 sterile plastic shipping 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.

Your UPS return envelope will be pre-addressed with this address:

Center for Laboratory Medicine  
Attn: Assistant Manager – Specimen Logistics 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
327 East 64<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10065

## How to collect the HLA samples

Do not eat or drink for about 1 to 2 hours 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 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 tube to dry (see Figure 1). Let them air dry for at least 2 to 3 hours.

If the swabs are not completely dry before you put them in the tube, they may grow mold. If this happens, we can't use them for testing.

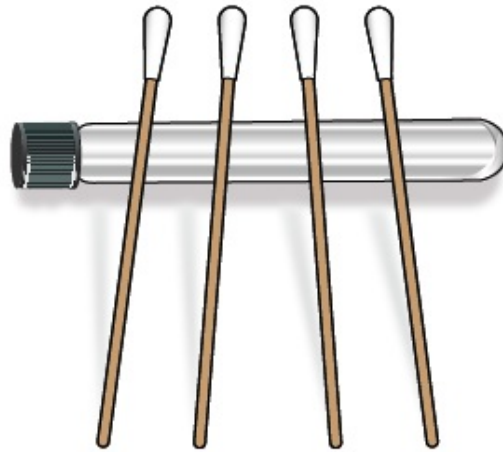


Figure 1. Swabs drying on test tube

## How to return the HLA samples

1. Place all 4 swabs inside the tube. Close the tube.
2. Check the pre-printed label (see Figure 2) to make sure the donor's name and date of birth are correct.

If anything is wrong, cross it out. Write the correct information on the label. Write clearly.

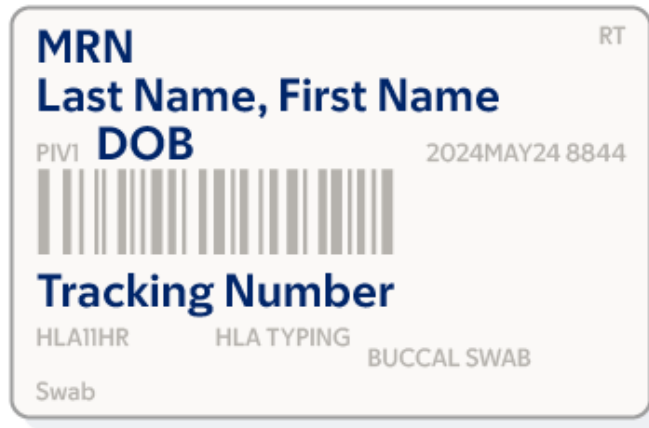


Figure 2. Pre-printed label with name and date of birth

---

3. Write the date and time the sample was collected directly on the other label (see Figure 3). Print clearly.

If you do not write the date and time the sample was collected, it will take longer to process your sample.

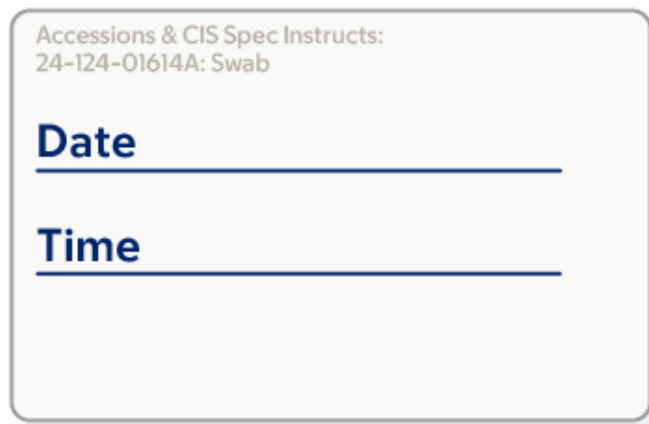


Figure 3. Pre-printed label with date and time

---

4. Put both labels on the tube. Make sure they don't overlap.

If you do not put both labels on the tube, we cannot process your sample. You will need to collect and ship a new one.

5. Put the labeled tube into the return envelope. Seal the envelope.

6. Bring the return envelope to a UPS drop off location. Visit [www.ups.com/dropoff](http://www.ups.com/dropoff) to find the one closest to you.

The return envelope will have a tracking number 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

- Do not 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.

# Checklist for Collecting and Returning HLA Cheek Swab Samples

## Collecting HLA samples

- I waited 1 to 2 hours after eating or drinking to collect the samples.
- I used 2 swabs on each cheek (4 total for both cheeks).
- I let the swabs air dry for at least 2 to 3 hours.

## Returning HLA samples

- I put all 4 air-dried swabs in the tube.
- I put the top of the tube on securely.
- My name and date of birth are correct on the pre-printed label. If they are not correct, I crossed them out and wrote the correct information.
- I wrote the date and time in the spaces on the blank label.
- I put both labels on the tube.
- I put the tube in the prepaid return envelope.
- I brought the envelope to a UPS drop off location.

For detailed instructions, read *Instructions for Collecting and Returning HLA Samples Using Cheek Swabs* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/instructions-hla-samples](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/instructions-hla-samples))

Your care team will tell you who to call if your HLA test kit is damaged, your kit is missing items, or you have questions.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

---

Instructions for Collecting and Returning HLA Samples Using Cheek Swabs - Last updated on January 30, 2025

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

**Last Updated**

January 30, 2025

Learn about our [Health Information Policy](#).

# Tell us what you think

# Tell us what you think

Your feedback will help us improve the educational information we provide. Your care team cannot see anything you write on this feedback form. Please do not use it to ask about your care. If you have questions about your care, contact your healthcare provider.

While we read all feedback, we cannot answer any questions. Please do not write your name or any personal information on this feedback form.

Was this information easy to understand?

Yes

Somewhat

No

What could we have explained better?

Please do not write your name or any personal information.

Submit