OSCE checklist for stool specimen collection

An OSCE checklist for stool specimen collection covers checking the request, infection control, collecting a sample without urine contamination into the right container, labelling at the bedside and sending it promptly with the form.

OSCE checklist for stool specimen collection: steps to practise

1. Check the request for the right patient and the test, such as culture or a test for blood, and any special container or timing.
2. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity (name, date of birth and wristband), explain why the sample is needed and gain consent.
3. If infective diarrhoea is possible, follow your isolation and PPE policy, and use soap and water for hand washing, as alcohol gel does not work against some germs.
4. Collect the right container with its spoon, a clean bedpan or a stool collector for the toilet, a label, a request form, gloves and an apron.
5. Ask the patient to pass urine first, if they can, so the stool is not mixed with urine, and give privacy.
6. Put on gloves and an apron. Use the spoon to place a sample from different parts of the stool in the container, including any blood or mucus, up to the fill line if there is one.
7. Close the container firmly and avoid soiling the outside.
8. Dispose of the rest of the stool and waste safely, remove gloves and apron and wash your hands. Help the patient to clean themselves and wash their hands.
9. Label the container at the bedside with the patient's details, date and time, complete the request form and put the sample in the specimen bag.
10. Send the specimen promptly or store it as your policy says. Record the colour and consistency (using the Bristol stool chart if your setting uses it) and the time sent.
11. Report blood in the stool, black stool, frequent diarrhoea or signs of dehydration to the nurse in charge.

What candidates commonly forget

- Mixing urine with the stool
- Not following infection control for diarrhoea
- Not including blood or mucus
- Soiling the outside of the container
- Not labelling at the bedside
- Not reporting blood or dehydration

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy.

Practise the hands-on steps with a classmate or in a skills lab, because an AI patient cannot watch your technique. You can practise the talking part with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. Next, try Personal care for a patient with vomiting and diarrhoea. Back to the medical surgical nursing OSCE page: medical surgical nursing OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for stool specimen collection?

Check the test, wash hands, confirm identity and consent, ask for urine first, collect from different parts of the stool into the right container, label at the bedside, complete the form, send promptly and record.

Why avoid urine in the stool?

Urine can affect the result and dilute the sample.

Should I note the appearance of the stool?

Yes. Note the colour, consistency, blood and mucus, and report blood or black stool to the nurse in charge.

Sources

- NICE CG84: diarrhoea and vomiting in children
- NICE CG139: infection prevention and control

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.