DNA Collection Guide

Instructions for collecting DNA at a crime scene

DNA may include blood, saliva and other bodily fluids or DNA from objects touched by a suspect, such as door knobs, handles or other items. Samples from objects touched by a suspect should only be collected from violent crimes such as homicides, sexual assaults and robberies. Items left behind by a suspect, such as cigarettes, drink containers, or clothing, should be submitted directly to the Forensic Genetics Laboratory for analysis on all types of crimes.

To collect a DNA sample you will need the following items:

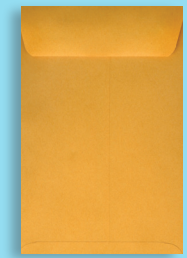
Gloves (New and Clean)

Sterile Swab(s)

Vial of Distilled or Unopened Bottle of Water

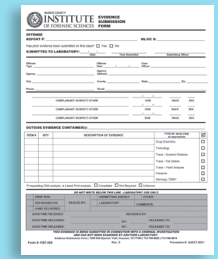
Swab Box(es)

Paper Envelope



Evidence Tape

HCIFS Evidence Submission Form



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STEP 1 Protect Yourself and the Evidence

- Wear new, clean gloves – change gloves frequently during collection of multiple areas or items
- Avoid adding your DNA: **DO NOT** touch your face, cough, sneeze or allow your sweat to drip near the evidence; for best results, wear a face mask (recommended)

STEP 2 Prepare the Swab Boxes

- Label all swab boxes to be used for the collected evidence with the following information:
  - Offense number
  - Brief description of the collection area
  - Date
  - Initials of officer collecting the evidence
- Punch out the perforated hole in the swab box for ventilation

STEP 3 Prepare Two Swabs

DNA evidence collection should be performed twice in each 2 in. x 2 in. collection area – once with a **DAMP** swab and a second time with a **DRY** swab.

Two swabs, one **DAMP** and one **DRY**, for each collection area should be prepared as follows:

- Open the swab package stick side first reducing the risk of adding your DNA to the swab
- Add a small amount of distilled or bottled water to **ONE** swab: **DO NOT** touch the tip of the water dispenser or let it touch the swab
- Shake the swab gently to remove excess water
- The second swab should remain **DRY**

STEP 4 Collect the Evidence

- First, collect evidence with the **DAMP** swab – Rub the swab vigorously in a back and forth motion while rolling it between your gloved fingers to ensure all sides of the swab make contact with the collection area
- Place the swab into the prepared swab box
- Next, collect evidence in the same area with the **DRY** swab following the method above
- Place the **DRY** swab into the same box as the **DAMP** swab ensuring that both swabs face the **same direction**
- Repeat this process for each new 2 in. x 2 in. area using a new set of swabs and a different swab box for each collection area

STEP 5 Package and Seal the Evidence

- Place all swab boxes into a paper envelope
- Seal the envelope with evidence tape: **DO NOT** wet the seal
- Label the envelope with your initials, date and offense number; be sure to write across both the tape and the envelope

STEP 6 Submit the Evidence

- Complete the HCIFS Evidence Submission Form (available at your duty office, HCIFS Evidence Room, or online at: **www.harriscountytx.gov/ifs/evidence.aspx**)
- Deliver the evidence and the form together to the HCIFS Forensic Genetics Laboratory
  - Evidence may be delivered on a walk-in basis 24 hours a day, seven days a week
  - If assistance is needed in submitting your evidence, HCIFS personnel are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., by calling 713-274-5730 or 713-796-6820