

Saliva Sample Volumes

Why do we ask for a larger sample volume? Steroid hormones are secreted in a bursts and pulses by various glands throughout the body. The more saliva that is collected, the more the effect is averaged out, and thus the results become more reliable and of the highest clinical relevance.

Saliva Instructions says the following, "Fill the large tube 1/2 to 3/4 full; fill small tubes at least half full (not including bubbles)." Occasionally physicians report to use that some patients struggle to collect sufficient volume. Additionally, it may be inconvenient for patients to interrupt a busy work day to collect a mid-day sample.

Large tube for morning sample



These tubes hold 12ml of liquid. The laboratory needs about 2.5ml to test up to 7 hormones. About 1% of tests are repeated for quality control measures to ensure results are accurate and precise. It would behoove patients to collect at least 5ml (1/2 full) of saliva or more to avoid the possibility of a recollect should the sample need to be repeated. The bottom line: The patient must collect at minimum 2.5ml (about 1/4 full).

Small Tubes for afternoon, evening, and night samples



These tubes hold 7ml of liquid. The laboratory needs only 1ml (about 1/4 full) for testing. The 1ml aliquot used for this test is sufficient for any repeat testing that may be needed. The bottom line: The patient must collect at minimum 1ml.