

Clean the area with a 70% alcohol wipe before sampling, this minimizes contamination and is an aid to microscopy if greasy ointments or powders have been applied

Skin scrapes, nail clippings and small hair pieces should be taken and placed in a sterile universal or Dermapak, and sent to the laboratory as soon as possible. Samples can be stored at room temperature before transportation.

Please send as much material as possible to allow a full investigation to be completed to assist with a correct diagnosis.

Suggestions for taking samples:

Skin samples : using a sterile scalpel blade scrape the edge of the lesion and collect the skin scrapes into a dermapak, fold up and seal or alternatively onto a clean piece of paper, and then transfer this into a sterile universal.

Nail : If possible, collect the subungual debris in addition to nail clippings. Sample the discoloured, dystrophic or brittle parts of the nail only, sampling as far back as possible from the distal part of the nail.

Hair : Pluck hairs from the affected area with forceps (infected hairs come out easily) and scrape the scalp with a scalpel. Preferably, the sample should include hair roots, the contents of plugged follicles and skin scales. Hair cut with a scissors is unsatisfactory as the focus of infection is usually below or near the surface of the scalp.