



# BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIMEN COLLECTION

The following collection guidelines are specific to Doctor's Data reference ranges and vary based on BHRT routes of delivery. Following these intervals assures your patients' results correlate to the supplementation ranges provided.

Note: For providers interested in testing endogenous/baseline levels of hormones, your patient must avoid hormone use for at least 72 hours prior to collection. After 72 hours, supplementation ranges are no longer applied.

Route of Delivery	Dosage Interval
Topical (including vaginal administration)	12-24 hours prior to sample collection
Sublingual (dissolved under the tongue)	24-36 hours, followed by two 8 oz. glasses of water
Oral	Continue day of collection
IM/SQ Injections	Mid-Cycle
Subcutaneous Pellets	Mid-Cycle
Transdermal Patch	Mid-Cycle
Cortisol	Discontinue 4-5 days prior to sample collection

**Topical (including vaginal administration):** The ideal dosage interval is 12-24 hours before sample collection (the time between last hormone application and first morning sample collection should be 12-24 hours). DO NOT APPLY ANY TOPICAL HORMONES THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DAY OF COLLECTION, RESUMING USE AFTER THE 4TH SAMPLE HAS BEEN COLLECTED.

Note: For dosages typically applied at bed-time, refrain from use the evening prior to sample collection or use topical formulation earlier in the day if the period between application and sample collection will be less than 12 hours; i.e.: 6:00 PM application for a 7:00 AM wake-up/morning sample collection (giving a 13 hour dosage interval).

**Sublingual (dissolved under the tongue):** The interval between last hormone usage and first AM salivary sample collection should ideally be 24 to 36 hours. After the last dose of the hormone has dissolved in the mouth, it should be followed by two 8 oz glasses of water to clear the mouth of any residual hormone. The first saliva sample should then be collected 24 - 36 hours later. DO NOT USE ANY SUBLINGUAL HORMONES THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DAY OF COLLECTION, RESUMING USE AFTER THE 4TH SAMPLE HAS BEEN COLLECTED.

Note: Residual contamination is often observed in samples with dosage intervals under 24 hours.

**Oral:** It is recommended to continue PO supplementation as prescribed on the day of collection.

**IM/SQ Injections:** The recommended dosing interval for IM hormones is mid-cycle. For example, the ideal sample collection day for hormone(s) being injected every two weeks (14 days) is 7 days after injection.

**Subcutaneous Pellets:** The recommended dosing interval for subcutaneous pellets is mid cycle. For example, the ideal sample collection day for hormone level monitoring when pellets are replaced every 90 days, is approximately day 45.

**Transdermal Patch:** Though the hormone in a transdermal patch is formulated for continual release, a tapering of dose does occur. Therefore, the recommended dosage interval for transdermal patches is mid cycle. For example, if a patch is replaced weekly (every 7 days) ideal sample collection should occur approximately 3-4 days after application.

**Cortisol/Glucocorticoid Supplementation:** Oral cortisol peaks and returns to baseline within 1-3 hours; therefore it is difficult to measure the therapeutic levels of hydrocortisone/cortisol. It is typically recommended to evaluate endogenous production of cortisol and, as such, recommended to stop ALL cortisol supplementation (including inhalers and topical creams) 4-5 days prior to sample collection.

**Melatonin Supplementation:** Last dose should be at least 36 hours before first saliva sample collection. recommended to stop ALL cortisol supplementation (including inhalers and topical creams) 4-5 days prior to sample collection.

Health Disclaimer: All information given about health conditions, treatments, products and dosages are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.



## Collection Schedule

Menopausal Status	When to Collect Sample
Premenopausal, regular cycles (28 days)	Days 19-23 Mid luteal phase
Premenopausal, regular cycles longer than 28 days	Count back 7-9 days from usual end of cycle, at a minimum of day 19 Luteal phase is almost always 14-16 days long
Perimenopausal, irregular cycles with ovulation pains	7 days after ovulation
Perimenopausal, irregular cycles, no ovulation pains	Test after day 14, and before day 1 of next cycle
Premenopausal, irregular cycle shorter than 14 days	Days 7-9
When there is no point of reference, e.g. 60 days	Collect samples; freeze; if no period within 2 days then mail the sample
Men and postmenopausal women	Anytime

Schedule	When to Collect Sample
Night shift workers	Collect first sample 30 mins after awakening regardless of time of day. Time of month should follow schedules above. Add note to requisition form noting shift worker.
Frequent travelers (especially across multiple time zones)	If possible, collect samples after 2 weeks at home on regular schedule.

Cortisol levels have a natural diurnal rhythm that varies throughout the day. Cortisol levels should reach their peak approximately 30 minutes after waking and then gradually decline throughout the day. The AM cortisol level is the most important, as it gives us the most information about adrenal function.

### Always Collect 4 Samples

We request that samples be collected at all four times during the day, regardless of what lab tests have been ordered.

When saliva kits are received by the lab, a fifth pooled tube of saliva is created by collecting a measured sample from each of the four submitted tubes. The fifth tube is mixed thoroughly to provide homogenization and becomes the source from which estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and DHEA are measured. Sex hormone levels fluctuate throughout the day. The pooling of these four samples enables the laboratory to provide a much better reflection of each patient's hormonal status. It is essentially an average of the four submitted samples and more accurately reflects physiologic hormone levels.

### Sample Schedule for Follow-Up Testing

At 2-3 Months	Any new patient with supplementation related to E2, E3, PG, T, and DHEA	Comprehensive Plus, Comprehensive Short, or Basic Panel depending on what is being treated
Up to 6 Months	Any patient still reporting symptoms after initial supplementation plan for E2, E3, Pg, T, and DHEA	Comprehensive Plus, Comprehensive, Short, or Basic Panel depending on what is being treated
	Any patient on adrenal support supplementation	Comprehensive, Adrenal, or Cortisol Panel
At 12 Months	All patients	Comp. Plus, Comp., Short, or Basic depending on what is being treated

Health Disclaimer: All information given about health conditions, treatments, products and dosages are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Updated 5/2020



1.800.323.2784 | info@doctorsdata.com | doctorsdata.com