Taking Gynaecological Swabs

Introduction

- Wash hands, introduce self, ask patient’s name, explain examination, why it’s necessary and get consent
- Get chaperone
- Explain procedure.
  - Be impersonal e.g. “it will involve placing a small plastic tube inside the vagina”
  - “It shouldn’t be painful but, if at any point you are uncomfortable or want to stop, just say so. One of the nurses will also be present to ensure you are comfortable and act as a chaperone”
  - Patient should be lying flat in lithotomy position but cover up until needed “You will need to undress from the waist down, put your heels together and touching your bottom then flop your knees down”
- A few questions before starting: LMP, intra-menstrual bleeding, discharge, contraception, last smear
- Ask if patient wants to go to the toilet first.

NB. Keep talking to and reassuring patient, using their name, throughout.

Gather equipment

- Gloves
- KY lubricating gel
- Speculum
- Swabs
  - Charcoal media swabs x2 (high vaginal and endocervical)
  - White Chlamydia swab pack (endocervical)
- Wash tray and place equipment inside in partially open packets

Performing the swabs

- Apply gloves
- Lubricate speculum and warn the patient
- Part labia and insert speculum with screw sideways
- Rotate speculum so screw is facing upwards and open it and tighten screw
- Hold in place (so it doesn’t slide out) with your left hand
- Use light to visualise cervix – look for erosions, ulcerations, growths, cervicitis, blood, polyps, ectropion
- To take each swab in turn:
  - Use your right hand to pick up the swab’s sample tube and place this in your left hand (also holding the speculum) and remove the lid (put this back into the tray for the meantime)
  - Pick up and take the swab with your right hand
  - Place the used swab back into its tube in your left hand, tighten the lid and place this back in the tray
- Order and detail of swabs to take:
  - **Hi-vaginal charcoal media swab** (BV, TV, Candida, group B strep): circle around the high vaginal wall once (lateral fornix to posterior fornix to other lateral fornix)
  - **Endocervical charcoal media swab** (gonorrhoea): place in endocervical canal and do one full 360° sweep (not rotation)
  - **Endocervical Chlamydia swab**: scrub endocervical region in and out for 10-30 seconds. Once done break off bottom half into its sample tube.
- Close speculum blades (but leave open slightly so don’t pinch vaginal walls) and remove speculum while rotating it back sideways.

To Complete

- Thank patient and cover them, give them a tissue and ask them to get dressed
- Fill in the sample pots and details on request form
  - Name, DOB, hospital/clinic number, address, GP name and address
  - Specimen site
  - Clinical details
- Send
- Document in patients notes
- Advise patient results will take approximately 1-2 weeks and they will have to come in to get the results (or they can get them by text if setting is a sexual health clinic)