

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is a sexual assault kit (SAK)?

A sexual assault kit (also known as a rape kit), is part of a medical forensic examination to collect evidence after a sexual assault. This might include swabs of any area where there was contact between the victim and the perpetrator.

## Why is a SAK collected?

The kit is intended to help collect and preserve potential evidence. The perpetrator's DNA could be left behind on the victim's body through saliva, skin cells, semen, and/or other bodily fluids. Presence of DNA can prove sexual contact from the suspect. Police and prosecution may use this evidence to help them investigate and/or prosecute a case or even solve other crimes.

## Who does the SAK examination?

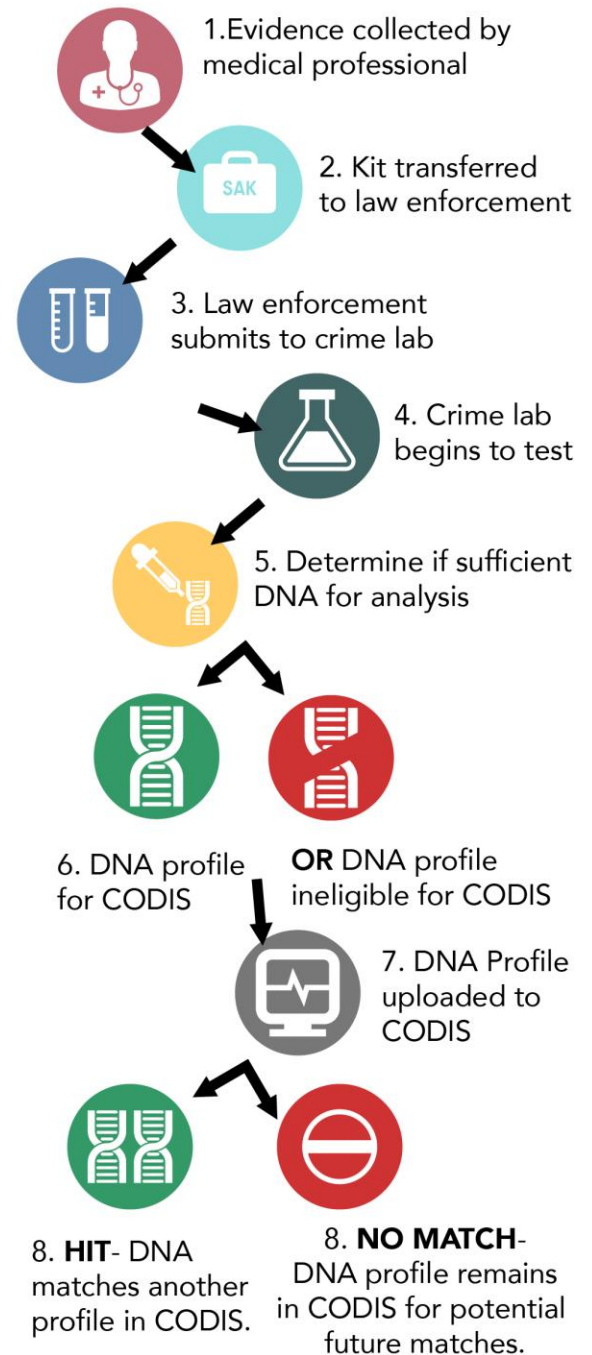
A trained health care provider completes the sexual assault kit. The health care provider can also do a full exam to care and document any injuries, and provide the victim with emergency contraception or other medication (perhaps to prevent contracting sexual transmitted infections). Documentation of injuries is also important for investigating and prosecuting a sexual assault.

## What happens after the SAK is collected?

After the sexual assault kit is collected, the law enforcement agency will take custody of the kit and then turn it into the crime lab to be analyzed (unless a restricted kit). All sexual assault kits are required by Utah law to be submitted to the Utah Crime lab within 30 days of law enforcement receiving the kit.

## What is a restricted kit?

When a victim does not want their sexual assault kit to be sent into the crime lab for processing or testing. The victim also agrees not to have their sexual assault exam forms released to law enforcement. The sexual assault exam forms are used by law enforcement to investigate sexual assault cases and also used by crime lab personnel to determine what pieces of evidence should be tested. A victim can un-restrict their kit at any time by contacting the law enforcement agency.



## **What is DNA?**

It stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. It exists in human cells, like in blood, teeth, and hair. It is a blueprint for how each human should be built. DNA is similar to fingerprints, no two people have the same fingerprint, and no two people have the same DNA except for identical twins.

## **How does the crime lab analyze the SAK?**

The crime lab looks at the swabs and other items in the kit. They check for DNA. It is possible they won't find any DNA or sometimes DNA can become contaminated. If they do find DNA, they will attempt to create a DNA profile.

## **What is a DNA profile and how is it used?**

A DNA profile is a unique pattern of genes, specific to an individual. A DNA profile appears as a series of numbers and does not include information about physical traits such as race, age, or medical conditions. When a DNA profile is created, it is uploaded into CODIS where it will be searched against other DNA profiles in CODIS to find a match or hit.

## **What is CODIS?**

CODIS stands for the Combined DNA Index System. CODIS is a master database that stores DNA profiles. There are two ways in which DNA profiles are uploaded into CODIS: A DNA profile from an unknown perpetrator is created from crime scene evidence and entered into the database (i.e. a sexual assault kit). A DNA profile from a known perpetrator is entered into the database (i.e. convicted felons have to give DNA to be entered into CODIS).

## **How does CODIS work?**

When a new DNA profile is created following a crime, it is entered into CODIS. The newly entered profile will be searched against other profiles. If there is a match between the new DNA profile and an existing profile in CODIS it comes back as a "hit" or "match". A hit/match could also generate years after the profile is uploaded.

## **Is the profile taken out of CODIS after a hit/match?**

DNA profiles are stored in CODIS even after a hit/match to help link and solve future crimes.

## **What does a CODIS hit/match mean for my sexual assault case?**

A CODIS hit/match could potentially identify an unknown suspect, confirm a suspect or link the suspect to another crime. However, DNA evidence is not the only part of the investigation, other evidence is generally needed to prove a case.

## **Who can I contact for resources or more information?**

Some victims and survivors may need additional support to get through what may be a particularly stressful and a traumatic experience. Victim Advocates from police departments, prosecutor's offices, rape crisis centers and other community-based victim service organizations can help. Contact the Department of Public Safety Victim Advocate at **801-965-4461** for more information.