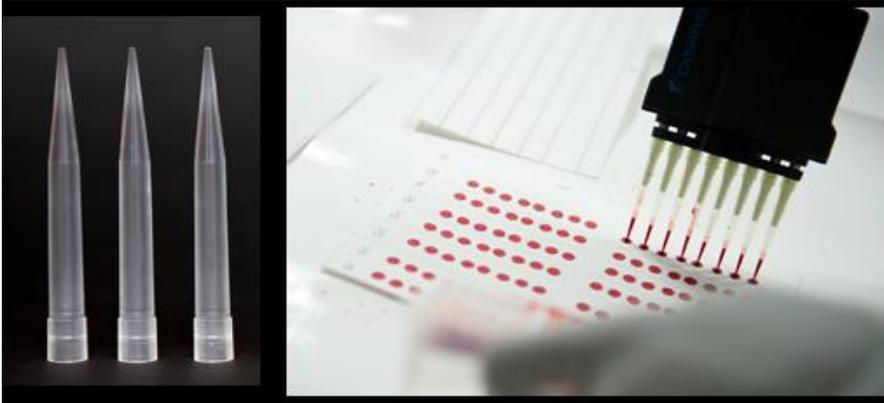




The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

Object 13: Disposable pipette tip



What is it?

A pipette is an instrument used to measure a precise volume of liquid. Most pipettes have a disposable tip to prevent contamination from one sample to the next.

History

The first pipette was invented over 200 years ago. The earliest pipettes were like glass straws and required the user to suck fluid into the pipette and hope that they didn't suck too hard and get a mouthful. Later pipettes had removable tips and an inbuilt mechanism to draw fluid into the tip.

Pathology

Pipettes are an essential tool for pathologists and scientists working in many specialties, both in research and routine daily work. They allow precise volumes of liquids to be easily sampled and transported, making tests accurate and reproducible. As recently as the 1970s the tips of pipettes were glass and many were made by hand by the user as required. Now most pipette tips are made of plastic. They are cheap, accurate and disposable and, unlike glass, do not shatter and cut the operator's hands.

Find out more

Many pathology specialties use pipettes every day to measure liquids such as blood and chemical reagents. You can see them in most laboratories so why not have a look at the programme of events at www.rcpath.org to find out if there's a laboratory open day near you?