

## Transportation & Handling of Samples Policy

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<b>Title</b>	Transportation and handling of Samples	
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1		
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## General

Everyone involved in collecting, handling and transporting specimens should be educated about standard infection control precautions and trained in:

- hand hygiene
- the use of personal protective clothing equipment
- the safe use and disposal of sharps

Patients and their carers should be given advice on the collection, storage and transportation of specimens, where appropriate.

## The collection of samples

Good quality specimens are obtained when the following are adhered to:

- The request form is completed accurately and the identity of the patient confirmed
- The specimen container is labelled correctly
- The patient is appropriately prepared
- Effective hand washing is performed, before and after collection of the specimen
- The specimen is collected correctly and the appropriate protective equipment clothing is worn; i.e. gloves, apron and, where splashing is possible or expected, goggles or a visor
- A vacuum collection system is used when performing phlebotomy
- The correct specimen is taken at the correct time
- The normal flora of the patient or the person collecting the specimen does not contaminate the specimen
- An adequate quantity and appropriate number of specimens is provided
- The risk of interchange of samples and sub samples is minimized
- All materials used in specimen collection are disposed of in a safe manner
- High risk specimens are identified and processed correctly
- Specimens are clearly labelled and transported to the laboratory in approved containers only
- All spillages and breakages are dealt with correctly
- The safety of the specimen collector, carrier, the general public and receiving laboratory is ensured by minimising risk

## Sample Containers

Specimen containers must be sufficiently robust to withstand the stresses likely to be put upon them and must not leak in normal use. Only containers approved by the Pathology Department may be used, so that the integrity of the specimen is suitably ensured during transit to the laboratory. Specimens that are sent in non-approved containers may not be processed by the laboratory.

The person sending the specimen must ensure that the container used for the transportation to the laboratory is the appropriate one for the purpose. It must be properly closed and checked to ensure no external contamination by the contents of the specimen container. Every specimen container, and request form, must describe the nature of the specimen.

## Transportation of samples

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), all staff have an obligation to protect themselves and others, e.g. the public, from inadvertent contamination from hazardous substances. All staff must, therefore, be aware of how to deal safely with clinical specimens and how to avoid any spillage or leakage of body fluids.

All clinical staff transporting specimens from a patient's home to a surgery, clinic or health centre must be provided with a rigid, robust, leak proof container with a tight-fitting lid. Containers designated for the transport of clinical specimens must never be used for the transportation of any other items.

The specimens must be protected from breakage during transport and only the person collecting the sample and the laboratory staff unpacking the samples should be required to directly handle the outside of the specimen container. The container housing the specimen must be placed in a self-sealing, single pocket plastic bag by the nurse/healthcare worker collecting the sample.

The plastic specimen bags are either attached to the request forms or contain the printed request form in a side pocket. The number of specimens in the bag must not exceed the capacity of the bag. When specimens in screw-top containers are submitted by patients at surgeries, the staff must check the lids are tightly closed once they have been placed in the plastic bag.

Transportation of specimens by vehicle is usually by a courier service or PCT van to the local hospital laboratory.

Vehicles used for the transportation of clinical specimens must have the following available for use in the event of an accidental spillage:

- Appropriate protective clothing (gloves and aprons)
- Spillage kit and written instructions
- Alcohol gel for hand hygiene

In addition, the vehicle must have surfaces that can be cleaned down with hot water and detergent in the event of a spillage. If other goods are transported, there must be a physical barrier between "clean" and "dirty" items. Staff transporting clinical specimens must always keep the vehicle locked when unattended. In the event of vehicle breakdown or road traffic accident, the driver must not allow members of the public to handle clinical specimens.