

Safe specimen handling

The way that patient blood specimens are handled in your surgery and transported is important.

Clinical Risk Management

Delays in processing blood specimens or storing them at the wrong temperature can affect specimen quality.

Poor quality specimens can result in inaccurate test results and may lead to your patients needing to be re-bled or receiving unnecessary treatment.

Temperature

Specimen collection tubes in use and in storage should not be exposed to extremes of temperature.

Phlebotomy should take place at 18-25°C.
Blood specimens should be kept between 18-25°C.

Don't store tubes or place patient specimens in the fridge, on or very near a radiator or in direct sunlight.

Time

Don't delay dispatch of your patient's samples. Samples should be transported to the laboratory for processing within 4 - 6 hours of venesection.

Recording the time on the request form helps the laboratory identify samples that may have deteriorated.

Failure to do this can result in the release of spurious or incorrect patient results.

Courier

The NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership Health Courier Service introduced key performance indicators for transport of specimens in Autumn 2018.

This includes temperature controlled transport and a guaranteed specimen journey of no more than 2 hours.

Please help your courier meet delivery targets.

Please ensure specimens are packed appropriately.

Segregate the microbiology / virology specimens from blood science specimens for dispatch in separate bags.

Please ensure that specimens are ready to be handed over to the courier on time from one central point in your surgery if possible.



For information on other sample types please consult the relevant laboratory handbook.



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