

PATHOLOGY SAMPLE TRANSPORT RULES FOR COURIERS AND PORTERS

1 POLICY STATEMENT

The policy provides guidance for couriers and porters in safe collection and transport of **samples** to the laboratory. For the policy relating to the collection of Blood Products and Components see [Porters to Collect Blood Components and Products from the Blood Transfusion Laboratory Policy CP2c/CG105](#)

2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to describe model rules and guidance for couriers and porters for the safe and timely transport for pathological specimens, to ensure specimen integrity, and safeguard patient identifiable information. They are not necessarily expected to be prescriptive or cover every eventuality. Circumstances and other rules will also be co-operational such as the guidelines of the Trust and contracted couriers terms of business.

3 DEFINITIONS

There are no terms and definitions used in a technical or special sense.

4 PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

4.1 Contact Telephone Numbers

Department Name	Contact Telephone Number/s
Blood Sciences Laboratory	(0117) 4148383
Blood Transfusion Laboratory	(0117) 4148350
Infection Sciences	(0117) 4146222
Bristol Genetics	(0117) 4146168
Cellular Pathology (including Histology advice re: formalin spillage)	(0117) 4149845, (0117) 4149842, or (0117) 4149890
Neuropathology	(0117) 4142400

IF IN DOUBT CONTACT THE LABORATORY FOR ADVICE

[Out of hours information can be located here.](#)

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4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

All staff involved in the transport and receipt of specimens need to comply with this policy.

Porters and couriers have a vital role in ensuring that the specimens arrive within a time frame appropriate to the nature of the requested examinations and protect the specimens from deterioration - which may be crucial to patient care.

4.3 Health and Safety

Transport of appropriately packaged laboratory specimens should be a safe activity. On rare occasions there may be breakage, or leakage of materials. We want you and others to be safe from contact with biological material that may be infectious. This document describes those steps that must always be taken to minimise the risk of contact with these materials.

4.3.1 General Precautions

Always Handle specimens carefully and responsibly (not only to prevent the risk of breakage, but rough handling or extremes of temperature may affect the result of the tests to be undertaken). **Do not overload transport boxes or bags as this may break sample containers or the transport container itself.**

Carry all specimens in the transport boxes or bags provided, never carry them any distance in your hands (even between adjacent rooms or wards) and never carry them in your pocket.

All individual sample and outer transport bags should be sealed.

Do not accept any specimens, specimen containers or carriers that are badly damaged or with obvious signs of leakage.

4.3.2 Information relevant to transport by vehicle

Carriage of Diagnostic Specimens by post, road, rail or air is covered by relevant (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Acts of Parliament even for short distances. You and your employer must work to relevant current regulations which place general duties in law on everyone in this role and drivers must be suitably trained. The proper shipping name for Diagnostic Specimens is now UN3373 – Biological Substances, Category B. Please ensure that all packaging (P650) and labelling conform. **Some high-risk pathogens, Category A, may need to be shipped according to UN 2814 - infectious substance, affecting humans. The department responsible for this transport will organise the packaging and appropriately licenced courier.**

4.3.3 Rules for those transporting biological specimens

You must:

- Completely cover exposed cuts, grazes, or broken skin with a waterproof dressing.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke (or apply make-up) whilst handling specimen.
- Only accept specimens that are packaged and labelled properly.
- Touch specimens as little as possible. If you do touch them directly wash your hands as soon as practicable afterwards.

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- Always wash your hands thoroughly before rest breaks (or before eating, drinking, smoking, or applying make-up at any time) and at the end of your work period.
- Trust employees should ensure they are aware of, and follow, Trust policies on Infection Control, Patient Confidentiality, Data Protection and Health & Safety at Work and Dress Code.
- Take specimens immediately to the laboratory. Do not transport them via rest areas or canteens unless essential to do so. See 6.3 Delivery Locations for Specimens.

4.3.4 General Sample Spillages

Couriers employed by DDL should have access to appropriate spill kits and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the vehicle and sufficient absorbent material in the packaging to absorb material from breakages. If a specimen is broken or leaks into a box leave it shut and leave it for the laboratory to deal with. For a spillage in the vehicle put on disposable gloves and cover the spillage with special granules from the kit (or disposable absorbent paper/material) then go to the laboratory for help. Do not touch it or try to clean it up yourself.

If a specimen leaks into a box or bag tell the laboratory or ward staff and ask them to make it safe.

If you drop a specimen and it breaks do not touch it or try to clear up the spill. Stay with the specimen to prevent others touching it. Be careful not to walk or let others walk through any spill. Send an appropriate person for help (e.g. qualified laboratory staff, nursing staff or in other areas a supervisor or manager). If this occurs in a vehicle see next section.

If you spill a specimen onto your uniform/clothing remove the affected clothing, immediately, if possible, wash your hands and put on clean uniform/clothing or other covering. Safely bag the affected clothing for cleaning and report the accident to your supervisor; (Trust staff - ask your supervisor if a Trust incident form is required to be written).

4.3.5 Formalin Spillages

Histology samples are transported in Formalin. Whilst the sample containers are designed to prevent spillage occasionally poorly sealed containers may leak. Spillage of formalin can be identified by an acrid smell that is irritating to nose and eyes. If you suspect formalin has been spilt, please contact the Histology lab on (0117) 4149845, 4149842, or 4149890.

If spillage occurs inside a vehicle, if it is safe to do so, leave the doors and windows open to aid ventilation, you must stay near the vehicle if this is the case to prevent others from accessing the vehicle.

5 SECURITY OF SPECIMENS

Please do not leave specimens unattended outside the control of clinical areas, primary care or Pathology.


Always keep vehicles containing specimens locked when unattended, even during collection/delivery.

If your vehicle breaks down, or you have an accident, do not let anyone touch the specimens unless you are sure that they will be competent to handle them (e.g. hospital laboratory staff, medical staff etc).

PATHOLOGY SCIENCES

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6 DELIVERY LOCATIONS FOR SPECIMENS

Building/Reception	Department/s		Transport bags	
Pathology Sciences Phase 1 (opposite Learning and Research) Ground Floor Specimen Reception 1	Blood Sciences	Haematology & Blood Transfusion	Red	Or Purple
		Clinical Biochemistry	Red	
		Immunology & Immunogenetics	Red	
	Infection Sciences: Bacteriology/Virology/MRL/ARL		Blue	
	Bristol Genetics		Black for inter-site	White and blue (south region) 
Toxicology		Pink		
Pathology Sciences Phase 2 (behind Phase 1) Level 1 Specimen Reception 2	Cellular Pathology Histology/Cytology		Yellow	Or White
	Neuropathology		Yellow	Or Clear

7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Health and Safety Executive Health Service Advisory Committee (1991).

Safe Working Practices and the Prevention of Infection in Clinical Laboratories. HMSO

Health and Safety Executive web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk>

NBT Specimen Transport Policy. (Q-Pulse Reference GPP/PPP/004)

Department of Health (2007) Transport of Infectious Substances Best Practice Guidance for Microbiology Laboratories