

Specimen Transport Procedures and Policies

CLINICAL SPECIMEN DELIVERY & TRANSPORT PROCEDURES

This procedure describes the requirements for clinical specimen transport in secondary containers (ie, bagging) following the OSHA guidelines for blood-borne pathogens.

- A. Zipper biohazard bags are the only acceptable bags for specimen transport (bags with twist ties are not acceptable).
- B. **Use separate specimen bags for each patient to ensure specimen identity and integrity.** Multiple patient specimens placed in a single transport bag will not be accepted for testing.
- C. Ensure that screw cap specimen containers are tightly closed before placing the specimen in the bag.
- D. To minimize leakage and breakage, transport blood culture bottles and body fluids separate from blood tubes. Blood culture bottles may be transported together in one biohazard bag.
- E. Place manual requisitions/transmittal forms for the specimen(s) in the **outside** pocket of the bag.
- F. Send irreplaceable specimens (i.e. CSF, surgical specimens) to the lab through transportation. Do not use the pneumatic tube system.

Special Considerations

A. Packaging Iced Specimens for Transport:



1. Place ICE into a secondary transport container (ziplock biohazard bag).
2. Place SPECIMEN into a second secondary container (ziplock biohazard bag).

3. Place SPECIMEN into the ICE secondary transport container (ziplock biohazard bag). Expel air from bag and tightly seal the zipper. Transport to the laboratory within one hour after collection.

Place manual requisitions in the outside pocket of the second bag. Do not add ice to the bag containing the specimen.

- B. **Large Containers:** Specimens in containers larger than urine cups should not be bagged (i.e., 24-hour urine containers).

NOTE: There are additional requirements for the handling of surgical specimens as described in [VCUHS Policy PA.AD.001 Tissue Examination](#) and Perioperative Surgical Services Policy 4111 Lab Specimens.

SPECIMEN TRANSPORTATION METHODS

Pneumatic Tube: The pneumatic tube system is connected to Laboratory Specimen Receiving Areas from a variety of different clinical units within VCUHS. These rapid transportation systems should be used whenever possible to transport stat specimens, but may also be effective for routine specimens. The requirement for specimen transport via these systems is that the specimen must be of an appropriate size to fit in the carriers, and the specimen, if fluid, must be in a leakproof container. Adequate packing material must be used to protect the enclosed specimens during transportation in these systems. Specimens in Luken's traps may leak in the pneumatic tube system. There are two pneumatic tube systems in use with different capabilities. Please refer to specific instructions posted at each station.

Phlebotomy Service: All phlebotomy services are responsible for the delivery of all specimens that they collect at each location. The timing of this delivery may be dependent on the phlebotomist's schedule and location. The use of phlebotomy services for procurement of specimens is encouraged by the laboratory, since the proper transportation time and conditions are the responsibility of the phlebotomist.

VCUHS Patient Transportation Services: The use of Transportation Service is available for the transportation of specimens to the Laboratory Specimen Receiving Areas. Contact this service for the details of their schedule of service and their transportation procedures and policies. Transportation Service is responsible for the proper transportation time and conditions.

Direct Delivery: The direct delivery of specimens by the person collecting the specimen is always an option. This mode of transportation is required for stat specimens if a pneumatic tube system is not available. The responsibility for the proper transportation time and conditions is the responsibility of the delivering person.