

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR TRANSPORT OF SPECIMENS TO THE PATHOLOGY LABORATORY

Specimens must be transported to the laboratory to ensure timely arrival at the correct destination and in such a way as to minimise risk of infection to both laboratory and non-laboratory personnel.

The transportation of all hazardous materials by road is governed by the ADR regulations. These are European wide guidelines on the safe packaging and management of all such materials. The sender is responsible for packaging and transporting diagnostic specimens in accordance with the road transport regulations. The packaging must meet various specifications to minimise the risk of infection to those who may come in contact with the specimens e.g. Taxi drivers, postal workers, couriers, porters, laboratory staff etc. Specimens sent to the laboratory must be packaged correctly according to the following guidelines:

Step 1: Primary Receptacle

- The specimen must be enclosed in a primary receptacle e.g. Blood tube.
- The sender must ensure that the primary receptacle is appropriate for the purpose and is leak proof.
- The sender must ensure that the primary receptacle is properly closed and that it is not externally contaminated.



Step 2: Secondary Container

- The primary receptacle i.e. Blood tube must be placed in a secondary container which is watertight and is leak proof at a pressure difference of 95kPa (0.95bar)

Examples of Secondary container:

A round leak proof mailing container
A plastic leak proof mailing bag



- Absorbent material must be placed between the primary and secondary container.

Step 3: Outer Packaging

- The secondary mailing container must be placed in an outer packaging. Either the secondary container or outer packaging must be rigid.
- The minimum dimensions on two sides of the package must be 100mm x 100mm.
- Cushioning must exist between the secondary and outer container.



Step 4: Labelling of Outer Package

The outer package must be labelled to include the name and address of the sender including relevant telephone numbers to be contacted in case of an emergency and the name and address of the destination laboratory. The outer packaging must be marked clearly as shown.



Biological Substance, Category B

Step 5a: Transport to Laboratory

Once the specimens are packaged and labelled according to the above guidelines they may be sent to the Laboratory by Postal service, Taxi, Courier, Ambulance or private vehicle.

Step 5b: Transport to Laboratory of large numbers of samples

Large boxes may be used for these deliveries by couriers etc.

These boxes must be;

- Made of smooth impervious material such as plastic or metal, which can easily be disinfected or cleaned.
- Secured with a fastenable lid and retain liquids in the event of a spillage (absorbent pad).
- Clearly labelled with “Biological Substance, Category B” and must also identify the sender including relevant telephone numbers to be contacted in case of an emergency.



Important Notes

- Placing specimens in an envelope or lunch-type box does not constitute safe and compliant packaging
- Diagnostic specimens must not be given to the patient to post or to drop in to the hospital unless the specimens are packaged according to the above guidelines.
- A maximum fine of €1900 may be imposed on the **sender** for not packaging and labelling the specimens according to the transport regulations.
- Any incidents or spills during specimen transportation should be reported to the Pathology Laboratory.
- Samples for some tests must be transported to the Laboratory within a specified time frame and at the correct temperature to ensure integrity and accuracy of result. Please refer to '*Pathology Test Information for GP's*', for sample requirements and specific instructions for specimens that require special handling. If in any doubt please contact the relevant department by telephone.
- To avoid specimen rejection, the specimen and Request Form must be correctly labelled as outlined in '*Pathology Specimen Acceptance Criteria*'.