

Department: General Pathology	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHSFT	Review Interval: Every 2 years
Author: Josie Long	Approved by: Claire Langley	

# Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Road to, or between, hospital sites.

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**EXAMINATION PROCEDURES** Must include all of the template headings. Where headings are not required, they should have 'n/a' written against them.

**POLICIES AND SOPS NOT REGARDING EXAMINATIONS** may use headings as appropriate to that document.

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## AMENDMENT HISTORY

Amendment		Amendment detail <i>(Include page numbers and/or section headings where the changes have occurred)</i>
Issue No.	Date	
		For amendment details prior to 2016, please see previous versions.
2.0	22.12.16	Update to include use of red transport boxes. Removal of historical memos.
2.1	27.03.19	Removal references not required. Remaining reference now refers to documents held on the departmental QMS software. Amendment of the 'Classification of specimens' document, to align with the wording in the reference document. Addition of Potential Sources of variation.
2.2	9/2/23	Changes to reflect use of LBC sample bags and change reference to Q-pulse.
3	31.10.2024	Full re-write, with regard to structure, and being more specific for sample types.

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## **Introduction**

This policy explains how to package samples for transport by road, by use of the Hospital and Pathology van service, to prevent cross-contamination of samples and reduce infection risk to sample handlers, as much as is practical.

Other methods of transport are available. Samples can also be transported:

- by hand, by staff/porters, to the laboratory.
- by Taxi – package as per this policy, or as per HSPOL 008 (for mail)
- by Mail (including couriers) – package as per HSPOL 008.
- by Trust Air tube. It is important that certain sample types must **NOT** be transported by air tube. These are:
  - ✘ CSF samples
  - ✘ Histopathology samples
  - ✘ Diagnostic Cytology samples (i.e. ‘non-gynae cytology)
  - ✘ Any specimens containing more than 50ml of fluid
  - ✘ Any obviously leaking samples.

## **Principle**

The packaging of pathological specimens for diagnostic or investigational purposes are subject to regulation primarily through The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the UK Carriage of Dangerous Goods Regulations (CDG) and the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the correct packaging and transportation of diagnostic and investigational specimens to and between the Pathology Departments at Cheltenham General and Gloucestershire Royal Hospitals.

## **Principal Stakeholders**

All Healthcare employees involved in the handling, despatch and transportation of diagnostic specimens must ensure that they are packaged according to the guidance provided, and that they are aware of the correct procedures in event of leakage/breakage of the samples in transit.

This document can be found on our webpages which can be accessed by GP Surgeries, Community Hospitals, Hospitals Drivers etc. Pathology Drivers have been trained and have written instructions relating to leaking/broken samples in their Standard Operating Procedures.

## **Classification of specimens**

For the purposes of transport, infectious substances are classified as either Category A or Category B:

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**Category A** is a pathogen which is transported by any mode in a form that, when exposure to it occurs, is capable of causing permanent disability, life-threatening or fatal disease to humans or animals.

**Category B** is an infectious substance that does not meet the criteria for inclusion in Category A, and must be transported as UN3373.

This procedure deals with **Category B** samples and how they should be packaged for transport by road to and between hospital sites, to comply with packing instruction 650 (see document 'Transporting Infectious Substances' in the References section of this document). Samples being sent to the hospital are all presumed to be Category B. Clinicians suspecting an illness caused by a Category A virus, should be in contact with the microbiology laboratory and specific transport arrangements can be discussed. Microbiology document MIPOL 009 contains further detail.

## UN3373 BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B

### 1. Packaging standard – applies to all samples

Following the steps below to ensure that samples are packaged in a way to both prevent leakage as much as possible, and to absorb any accidental leaks that may occur during transport by road.

Samples must be labelled according to the Pathology Labelling Policy.

**Every pathological specimen must be enclosed in a primary leak-proof container (e.g., screw-cap universal container, blood tube etc.,) and sealed or securely closed.**

Select the appropriate section for the sample(s) being sent:

For sample types or locations **not** using the plastic red transport boxes, follow point **1.1 below**. This includes Gynae samples for Bristol.

For blood tubes in locations which **are** using the plastic red transport boxes, follow point **1.2 below**.

For larger samples, see point **1.3 below**.

For urgent samples being sent *between* Pathology Gloucester (GRH) and Pathology Cheltenham (CGH), see point **1.4 below**

For racks of samples being sent *between* Pathology Gloucester (GRH) and Pathology Cheltenham (CGH), see point **1.5 below**.

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1.1. For sample types or locations **not** using the plastic red transport boxes (including Gynae samples destined for Bristol):

The primary container must be sealed in a leak-proof plastic bag ('Minigrip', or specimen bag with the request card attached to the outside).

Single or Multiple samples must then be sealed in a coloured plastic sample transport, using the following colours:

- Red- Transfusion and Ante Natal samples.
- Green- Haematology/Chemical Pathology combined samples
- (Dark green is for 24hr urines specifically – see section 4.)
- Blue- Microbiology
- White- Histology & Diagnostic Cytology
- Orange & White- Gynae LBC samples for Bristol

Multiple coloured sample transport bags must then be grouped in to a clear heavy duty plastic bag containing absorbent material and secured at the neck with a clip.

The entire package will be placed inside a secure, padded carrier for transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans.

1.2. For blood tubes in locations which **are** using the plastic red transport boxes:

The blood tubes may be 'batched' into the red boxes, which must contain a layer of absorbent material. Request forms that match the samples must also to be put in the red boxes.

Several red boxes can then be put in to one secure, padded carrier for transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans.

1.3. Large samples

For 24hr urines, the dark green sample transport bag should be used and sealed, with form attached. This can be place in to a white carrier bag with handles for ease of transport. The sample must then be placed in to a clear heavy-duty plastic bag containing an absorbent pad or other absorbent material, and sealed with a clip. This clear bag must then be put in to a secure, padded carrier for transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans.

Other larger samples (Histology buckets etc.) should be sealed inside a leak-proof plastic bag, with the request card attached to the outside, and then further sealed individually, inside a heavy-duty plastic bag containing

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an absorbent pad or other absorbent material, ready for transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans.

**1.4. Urgent samples being sent by Pathology staff, from one hospital site to another.**

To send urgent Microbiology, Diagnostic Cytology or Histology samples from one Pathology site to another:

The sealed sample container should be placed in a in clear 'Minigrip' bag, with the request form.

The sample should then be placed in to an urgent transport pod with an appropriately coloured screw cap lid:

- Microbiology – Yellow lid
- Diagnostic Cytology – Green lid
- Histology – Black lid.

The lid should be made tamper evident with the use of a cable tie through the handle.

See section 1.1 for Gynae samples being sent to Bristol, also considered urgent.

**1.5. Racks of samples being sent by pathology staff from one hospital site to another**

Where multiple samples are transported in racks between hospitals, these should be pre-sorted by speciality before racking. The rack and samples should be securely wrapped using 'cling film', and the forms (where applicable) sealed separately in a 'Minigrip' bag. The rack and forms should then be placed into the relevant heavy duty plastic bag containing sufficient absorbent material to absorb all liquid in the event of a spillage, ready for transport using the padded carriers.

**2. Transport bag/box labelling**

The coloured plastic Transport bags will be marked 'Gloucestershire Hospitals NHSF Trust, with contact details for the relevant department, the 'Biohazard' logo and any relevant Chemical Hazard warning signs. The lettering or bag will be colour coded to identify the samples they contain:

Where the samples are too large to go into the pre-printed bags (e.g. Large Histology buckets), clear bags may be used and their destination marked in indelible marker on the outside.

The padded carriers will be clearly marked with the Trust's name, the UN3373 mark and the words:

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## **“BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B”**

No other labelling is required.

### **Sending method**

Samples packed in accordance with the above procedure may be sent by the Hospital or Pathology Van Service.

Samples for carriage by Taxi should be packaged according to the standard above, or to the standard for transporting specimens by mail- see separate policy - 'Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Mail'.

Packaging of samples for transport by Royal Mail or other Courier are dealt with in a separate policy- 'Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Mail'.

### **Potential sources of variation**

The most likely sources of variation are the procedure not being followed correctly, and therefore risk of spillage, incorrect coloured bags or and inadequate labelling. Transport boxes are printed with UN3373 therefore laboratory staff are always alerted to the Category B content.

Manual sorting methods in PAN and departmental receptions will locate any samples in the wrong bags and re-direct them. Routinely, samples are transported in more layers than required by packing instruction 650, to help protect against leaks.

### **References**

QMS EXT 013: Transporting Infectious Substances: A guidance document produced by the Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

HSPOL 008 Packaging of Pathology Specimens for Transport by Mail

MIPOL 009 Specimen transport policy [Microbiology].

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