

Pathology Specimen Storage Guidance

If a delay in transporting pathology specimens to the laboratory is unavoidable the following general guidance on storage is offered to help prevent deterioration.

- **Biochemistry** (☎ 01271 322345)
 - ◆ Gold/yellow top tubes – Centrifuge ASAP but if delayed store at ROOM TEMPERATURE^{**}
 - ◆ Purple top tubes (K₃ EDTA)
 - ◆ Grey top tubes (Sodium Fluoride/ K₃ EDTA)
 - ◆ Urine specimens
 - ◆ Other fluids (pleural, ascitic)
 } Store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

- **Haematology** (☎ 01271 322329)
 - ◆ Purple top tubes (K₃ EDTA for FBC, HbA1c & Viscosity)
 - ◆ Pale blue top tubes (Citrate for INR/coagulation)
 - ◆ Gold top tubes (e.g. for Glandular fever)
 } store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

- **Microbiology- (Including Virology)** (☎ 01271 322347)
 - ◆ All specimens to be stored in the refrigerator (2-8°C) **EXCEPT:-**
 - ◆ Blood culture specimens
 - ◆ Skin scrapings (for mycology studies)
 - ◆ Quantiferon TB Gold Samples
 } store at room temperature[#]

- **Transfusion** (☎ 01271 322327)
 - ◆ Store all specimens in the refrigerator (2-8°C) **EXCEPT:-**
 - ◆ Specimens for Cold Agglutinins – Cannot be stored, contact laboratory for advice.

- **Histology** (☎ 01271 322340)
 - ◆ All specimens to be placed in and covered by 10% neutral buffered formalin and stored at room temperature[#]

- **Cytology (non-gynae, cyst fluids, urines etc in a white top Universal Container)** (☎ 01271 322340)
 - ◆ All specimens – store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

Notes:-

* Refrigeration of specimens and delayed transport will affect some tests, e.g. potassium and phosphate, such that analysis may not occur.

Specimens for room temperature storage should not be exposed to extremes of temperature e.g. placed in direct sunlight, near a heat source (e.g. radiator) or allowed to chill or freeze. Ideally, they should be kept in an insulated container between 20°C – 25°C.

Centrifugation is recommended for all routine gold/yellow top tubes as it helps maintain specimen integrity during transportation to the laboratory from GP practices in periods of hot or cold weather.

These guidelines apply to the common laboratory test repertoire – please contact the appropriate laboratory (numbers given above) for information relating to specific tests.

Pathology specimens should be transported to the laboratory as soon as possible after collection. Delay could result in deterioration in the specimen and invalidate the results of any investigations carried out.