

## PACKAGING LABORATORY SAMPLES FOR TRANSPORT WITH COURIER

Each office is responsible for getting samples ready for the courier to pick up for delivery to the lab, and we appreciate your help with this. In order to ensure optimal service for all of our clients, we ask that samples be packaged and ready to go prior to the courier arriving. Each time the courier has to wait for a sample, other offices and patients are likely to be inconvenienced by a delayed sample pickup.

1. Inspect each **primary container** (the container in direct contact with the sample) prior to packaging for courier pick-up. Look for evidence of leaks and please carefully turn screw-capped containers upside down to ensure that their lids are on securely. A leaky sample may contaminate other patient samples and could render one or more samples unacceptable for testing.
2. If you have a collection and you do not have time to allow the sample to clot and centrifuge, it might be a better choice to process the sample correctly and wait until the following day for the sample to be picked up. Improper handling can affect laboratory results and ultimately patient care.
3. For physician offices and clinics, UVM Medical Center provides a medium size bag for packaging samples. When properly sealed, this bag is a watertight barrier between the primary container and the person transporting the sample. The exterior of the bag must remain clean so that it can be carried safely without wearing gloves.
4. Package like sample types together at the appropriate temperature.
5. Put the requisitions corresponding to the samples in the back pocket of the specimen transport bag. If a patient has multiple samples that require storage at different temperatures, place a copy of the laboratory requisition with **each sample**.
6. Do not put more than 12 tubes of blood in one bag. It is important not to overfill specimen transport bags. If there are too many samples in a bag, some of the specimens may not be maintained at the proper temperature.
7. On the front of each bag check off the storage requirement for the samples contained within; this ensures that the courier will store the samples appropriately during transport.
8. Keep a record of what you give to the courier for transport. Make sure you have packed all of the samples for the tests requested.
9. Please make sure that all of the specimens are handed off to the courier upon arrival.
10. If a sample container has a flat bottom, it should be placed so that it sits upright.
11. If testing is STAT, place a STAT sticker on the same side as the storage requirements, and notify the lab (1-800-991-2799 or 847-5121) and the courier that the testing is STAT.

## Specimen Transport Bags

All primary sample containers must be contained inside a secondary or outer container. The secondary container must be a watertight barrier, such as a sealed plastic bag. For outside clients that are transported by a courier, the secondary packaging has a biohazard warning attached to it. The exterior of the outer container must remain clean so that the package can be carried safely without wearing gloves.

Plastic biohazard bags are available to use as a secondary container for laboratory samples. These bags have an outer sleeve in which to place the laboratory requisition and an inner sleeve in which the primary sample container can be sealed. We provide biohazard bags in several different sizes for use by offices and hospitals that send samples to us. Below is a summary of guidelines for use of plastic biohazard bags.

It is important not to overfill specimen transport bags. If there are too many samples in a bag, some of the specimens may not be maintained at the proper temperature.

Bag Size	Usage
Small:	<p><u>For hospital client use only.</u> Dimensions: 6 x 8.5 inches.</p> <p>Holds a maximum of 6 samples.</p> <p>Bags are color coded by temperature: white for room temperature, pink for refrigerated, and yellow for frozen.</p> <p>These bags contain a sheet of absorbent material.</p>
Small:	<p><u>For inpatient units and UVMC Main Campus clinics.</u> Dimensions: 6 x 8.5 inches.</p> <p>Holds a maximum of 6 samples. Bags are transported by medical personnel and are not marked (clear) and should be brought to the laboratory immediately.</p>
Medium:	<p><u>For client doctors' offices.</u> Dimensions: 8 x 12 inches.</p> <p>Holds a maximum of 12 samples.</p> <p>Package samples by temperature; check temperature box that applies.</p> <p>These bags do not contain absorbent material.</p>
Large:	<p><u>All clients.</u> Dimensions: 12 x 13.5 inches.</p> <p>Holds a maximum of 20 samples.</p> <p>Package samples by temperature; check temperature box that applies.</p> <p>These bags do not contain absorbent material.</p>

## Sample Transport Temperature Requirements

Please package similar sample types that are transported at the same temperature together.

### Refrigerated Specimens: 21°C (Wet Ice or ice pack)

- If you use an ice pack, do not put the ice pack directly on the primary container or the tube might freeze.
- Place all refrigerated blood tubes and Aptima containers into a medium-sized (small for hospitals) specimen bag (or bags) with accompanying requisitions.
- Place all other refrigerated samples, i.e. urines or swabs, into a **separate** medium-sized specimen bag (or bags) with accompanying requisitions.
- Hospitals Only: Place smaller bags into a large specimen bag. Mark bag as refrigerated.

### Frozen Specimens: 4°C (Dry Ice)

- Place all frozen specimens in a medium-sized (small for hospitals) specimen bag with a copy of each requisition. Mark bag as frozen.

### Ambient Specimens: 21°-25°C

- Place ambient specimens in a medium-sized (small for hospitals) specimen bag (or bags) with accompanying requisitions. Mark bag as ambient.

### PAP Test (Ambient Temperature)

- Place up to 2 Thin Prep vials into a small or medium-sized bag, with one copy of accompanying requisition. Mark PAP Test on the outside of the bag.
- Hospitals: Place no more than 10 small bags in a large bag. Mark PAP Test on the outside of the bag.

### Surgical Pathology Specimens (Ambient Temperature)

- Place specimens from the same patient in one medium-sized bag with requisition. Mark Surgical Pathology on bag.
- Hospitals: Place all Surgical Pathology specimens in large bag. Mark Surgical Pathology on bag.

### 24-Hour Urine Jugs (Temperature Varies)

Two-liter (half gallon) brown jugs may contain any of a variety of preservatives; store at the temperature appropriate for the particular preservative. Urine jugs must always be transported in an upright position inside a large specimen bag.

Electronic Orders: 24-Hour urine samples should be on a separate order.

Notes: Urine specimen cups and non-stat histology specimens and microbiology specimens can be placed in the bag individually with the requisition in the back pocket. Be sure caps are screwed on securely.