

Best Specimens for the Laboratory

The preparation of blood samples is a critical first step in the testing process. By understanding and adhering to the following processing instructions, your facility will dramatically IMPROVE SPECIMEN INTEGRITY, resulting in a QUALITY SPECIMEN, a QUALITY RESULT, and ultimately QUALITY TREATMENT for your patients.

DRAWING A SPECIMEN:

- Find specimen requirements by accessing the online test directory found on our website.
- Follow proper phlebotomy techniques
 - do not leave tourniquet on longer than 1 minute
 - do not thump veins or have patient pump fist
 - clean with alcohol and allow to air dry
 - follow the correct order of draw
 - If tube is filling slowly, try another tube or restick the patient
 - Mix all tubes adequately (8-10 times) (Coag tubes 4-6 time)

SPECIMEN PROCESSING:

- Allow serum specimens to clot upright (vertical position) for a minimum of 30 minutes.
- Patients on anticoagulant therapy may need more time to clot.
- Check the tube for adequate clotting and observe a dense clot.
- Separation of serum and plasma from cells should take place within 1 hour after collection. Recollection is recommended if SST and/or PST is not spun down within 2 hours of collection.
- Plasma specimens do not need to clot and can be centrifuged after mixed.

CENTRIFUGATION:

- Centrifuge within one hour from draw time to maintain specimen integrity
- Make sure centrifuge is balanced properly before starting
- Centrifuge for 15 minutes at approximately 3000-3500 rpms in a fixed angle centrifuge.
- Centrifuge for 10 minutes at approximately 2700-3100 rpms in a swing bucket centrifuge.
- Gel must completely separate serum/plasma from cells
- Never re-centrifuge specimens in original tube. A potential for inaccurate results is possible; analytes from cellular leakage/exchange, accentuated by clot retraction, will then be centrifuged into the serum being used for testing. If separation is not complete, follow steps below:
 - Transfer serum/plasma to an aliquot tube.
 - Centrifuge aliquot tube
 - Transfer serum/plasma to another aliquot tube, leaving behind any red cells at the bottom of the tube.
- If the required specimen is plasma, Blue tubes (Na Citrate) and Lavender tubes (EDTA) will need to be separated if transport to the lab will be delayed.

SPECIMEN STORAGE:

- Most specimens should be refrigerated after collection and processing
- Refer to the specific test requirements by accessing the test directory found on our website (www.chihealth.com/lab-services)

SPECIMEN TRANSPORT:

- Bag each patient's specimen(s) in a separate biohazard bag
- Place the specimen in the ziploc portion and the requisition in the outside pocket.
- For best specimens, process specimens before storage and transport to the lab

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