

LABORATORY COLLECTION MANUAL	REJECTION OF MICROBIOLOGY SPECIMENS
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I. GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Proper collection and transport of specimens is critical to the quality of results produced by the microbiology laboratory and cannot be overemphasized. The validity of all diagnostic information produced in the lab is contingent on the quality of the specimen received. Consequences of poorly collected and/or poorly transported specimens include failure to isolate the causative organism, and recovery of contaminants or normal flora which could lead to improper treatment of the patient. The saying is "garbage in--garbage out."

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. When a specimen is received in the laboratory, it is subjected to scrutiny and must meet certain minimum requirements before being accepted for testing.
- B. A specimen shall not be rejected until appropriate efforts have been made to correct the problem, but it may be rejected for failing to meet acceptability criteria.
- C. An unacceptable specimen will not be immediately discarded, but held under the proper condition for that specimen in the event testing is deemed necessary regardless of collection conditions.
- D. If a specific physician order requires processing of an unacceptable specimen, results will be issued with a qualifying statement as to the nature of specimen integrity and the questionable accuracy of results.
- E. If, indeed the specimen is rejected, it is listed on the Microbiology Disposition Log for rejected specimens, along with reason for rejection and documentation of notified personnel.

III. REJECTION CRITERIA

A. SPECIMEN RECEIVED WITHOUT A LABEL OR WITH AN IMPROPER LABEL

1. At a minimum, specimen label must include patient name and date of birth as the two patient identifiers.
2. Call unit, office, or person responsible and notify of the problem.
3. Person responsible for collection must come to the laboratory to identify and label the specimen. Emphasize their responsibility if they choose to correct the problem in this manner.
4. If any doubt exists as to origin of specimen, reject and order recollection.

B. SPECIMEN IMPROPERLY COLLECTED OR TRANSPORTED

1. Check with person responsible for collection to determine reason for deviation from procedure. Give instruction in the proper method of collection and transport to prevent repetition of the error.
2. If reason warrants, determine if specimen can be utilized. If not, order recollect.

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C. SPECIMEN CONTAINER EXHIBITS GROSS EXTERNAL CONTAMINATION

1. Container exteriors must be clean and free of gross contamination. Leaking specimens indicate integrity of the specimen has been compromised and puts transport and laboratory personnel at risk.
2. Notify specimen collection personnel of the problem and order recollect.

D. SPECIMEN NOT OF SUFFICIENT QUANTITY

1. If specimen has multiple orders, request priority listing of tests.
2. Notify responsible personnel and order recollection.

E. SPECIMEN MUST BE RECEIVED IN A TIMELY MANNER

1. Order recollection if specimen has exceeded recommended limits for transport.
2. Notify responsible personnel.

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APPROVED BY: Martin F. Belli, M.D. DATE: 8-96

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APPROVED BY: Martin F. Belli, M.D. DATE: 3-98, 4-99, 5-2000

See original policy in the Laboratory for all documented annual reviews.