

Specimen Storage and Transport Conditions

Refrigerated Specimens

Most specimens are refrigerated at 2-8⁰ C while awaiting pick-up, however if you are unsure about the storage temperature for a particular specimen, please check the storage and transport requirements in the test listing section of this manual or call Client Service.

Ambient Specimens

1. Mark the specimen bag "Room Temperature" with a marker or sticker.
2. Notify the courier about the ambient condition at specimen pickup, whenever possible, so that the specimen receives appropriate handling.
3. If there are multiple specimens with different storage conditions on the same patient and only one requisition, the specimens should be placed in separate bags with a copy of the requisition in each. Store each separate bag under the appropriate conditions for the test ordered. It should be made clear on the requisition copy which test this particular specimen is intended for.
4. If you have any concerns regarding the effect of extreme weather conditions on ambient specimens, please contact Client Service at (630) 941-4542 for instructions.

Frozen Specimens

1. Send the indicated number of frozen serum or plasma aliquots for each assay requested.
2. Each plastic specimen vial should not be more than three-fourths full. Never freeze a VACUTAINER tube!!
3. Mark the specimen bag "FROZEN" with a marker or sticker.
4. The specimen should be kept in the freezer, whenever possible, until the courier arrives.
5. If there are multiple specimens with different storage conditions on the same patient and only one requisition, the specimens should be placed in separate bags with a copy of the requisition in each. Store each separate bag under the appropriate conditions for the test ordered. It should be made clear on the requisition copy which test this particular specimen is intended for.
6. Notify the courier about the frozen condition at specimen pickup, whenever possible, so that the specimen receives appropriate handling.
7. If you need to leave a frozen specimen in a lockbox, fasten a frozen ice pack to the specimen with a rubber band before placing it in the lockbox. Contact Client Service to let them know that you are leaving a frozen specimen in the lockbox; if we can arrange to pick up the frozen specimen earlier than scheduled, we will do so.

Highly Infectious Specimens

Please call Client Services before sending any highly infectious cultures or specimens from a patient that may have been exposed to highly infectious agents. Special Hazmat packaging and handling may be required by the Department of Transportation, especially if you are using express shipping.

Specimen Transport Services

Courier Pickup

1. Courier services are available for transporting specimens to EMH Reference Laboratory. Routine courier service is available Monday through Friday from 7 am to 10 pm, and on Saturday from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.
2. Specimens must be packaged appropriately (see below) and ready for transport when the courier is expected to arrive.
3. Depending on your laboratory service usage, your account may either be assigned a regular pickup time, or placed “on-call”. If you are placed on-call, you must call the EMH Reference Laboratory Customer Service Center by 5 pm Monday thru Friday (noon on Saturday) for same day specimen pick-up. On-call clients receive one daily pickup only on those days when they have specimens to be picked up.
4. An additional charge will be applied to your account for each non-scheduled courier pickup. A non-scheduled pickup is defined as a request for courier service that will occur;
 - a. At a time other than your regularly scheduled or on-call pickup, OR
 - b. After 5 pm for same-day service, OR
 - c. For STAT service.
5. Please contact EMH Reference Laboratory Office for applicable charges on non-scheduled courier services.

Packing Specimens for Courier Pickup

1. Once collection and processing instructions have been followed and a specimen is ready to send, put the specimen in one of the ziplock bags provided. Make sure the caps are securely fastened, and seal the bag.
2. Place the requisition in the outside pouch.
3. Seal the bag and affix a courier barcode label to the outside. If you would like to track your specimen, keep the duplicate barcode label in a logbook (do not use the duplicate label for another specimen bag).
4. Indicate the appropriate transport temperature on the specimen bag. Either mark the box next to the required temperature printed on the bag, or affix the “ROOM TEMP,” or “FROZEN” sticker, if appropriate.

Express Shipping for Biologic Specimens

For clients who do not have access to a courier route, we can provide you with shipping supplies and overnight shipping. Your supplies will include instructions for preparing and shipping diagnostic specimens in compliance with carrier, IATA and DOT regulations.

Packing Biologic Specimens for Shipping

Clients who package biologic specimens for shipping are responsible for knowing and adhering to regulatory procedures, and for documenting the appropriate training of anyone packing biologic specimens for shipment. For more information on shipping biologic specimens, please refer to the EMHRL Biologic Specimen Shipping booklet and specific packing instructions provided with your shipping supplies.