

Danger of Infection Samples

Reason for labelling

To comply with national Health and Safety guidance and to alert laboratory staff that the specimen may require processing differently.

What is a “high risk” (Danger of Infection) specimen?

Clinical judgement must be used to label specimens correctly, and the onus for this is on the requestor. Specimens from the following will require “Danger of Infection” labelling:

- patients with proven infection with a Hazard Group 3 (HG3) pathogen (see appendix) e.g. hepatitis B and C, HIV, tuberculosis and other mycobacteria, typhoid, brucella and anthrax
- Patients suspected of having a HG3 pathogen (information from clinical history and examination e.g. injecting drug user, haemophiliac, vCJD)
- a patient who is part of an ongoing outbreak caused by a HG3 pathogen.
- Inmates of Her Majesties’ Prisons

Specimens from the following do **not** require “Danger of Infection” labels:

- patients with MRSA.

If there is doubt as to whether a specimen is “high risk”, please contact the microbiology laboratory. **On no account should specimens be taken from patients suspected of having any pathogen in Hazard Group 4, e.g. viral haemorrhagic fever (Lassa, Marburg, Ebola and Congo-Crimean), or Hendra or Nipah viruses without prior consultation with the on-call medical microbiologist/virologist.**

Handling “Danger of Infection” specimens

“Danger of Infection” labels should have black print on a yellow ground, and should be self-adhesive. A label must be placed on the high-risk specimen container and its request form, which must give sufficient clinical information to enable the experienced laboratory staff who will receive it to know what special precautions are necessary in the laboratory. The request form may be folded so that the information need not be conspicuous to other people, but the “Danger of Infection” label must be clearly visible.

The specimen container must be placed in an individual transparent plastic bag, which should then be sealed. The specimen should then be transported by the usual system.

Appendix

Specimens from patients known or suspected to be suffering from the following clinical conditions/micro-organisms must have “Danger of Infection” labels on both specimen and request form. This list is not exhaustive.

Bacteria

Anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*)

Bacillary dysentery (*Shigella dysenteriae* type 1)

Brucellosis (*Brucella* species)

Ehrlichiosis (*Ehrlichia* species)

E. coli O157/VTEC

Glanders/Melioidosis (*Burkholderia/Pseudomonas mallei* and *pseudomallei*)

Plague (*Yersinia pestis*)

Q fever (*Coxiella burnetti*)

Rickettsia species

Tuberculosis and *Mycobacterium* species

Tularaemia (*Francisella tularensis*)

Typhoid and paratyphoid (*Salmonella typhi* and *paratyphi*)

Viruses

Dengue

Hantaviruses

Hepatitis (unknown cause, hepatitis B, C, D, E and G)

HIV/HTLV

Rabies

Yellow fever

Any pyrexial returning traveller (from non viral haemorrhagic fever area)

Also Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (CJD, vCJD etc)

Parasites

Echinococcus species

Leishmania species

Falciparum malaria (*Plasmodium falciparum*)

Naegleria species

Pork tapeworm (*Taenia solium*)

Sleeping sickness (*Trypanosoma* species)

Fungi

Blastomyces dermatitidis

Cladophialophora bantana

Coccidioides immitis

Histoplasma species

Paracoccidioides brasiliensis

Penicillium marneffe

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