

THE LEEDS TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

POLICY FOR SAFE PACKAGING AND TRANSPORTATION OF SPECIMENS FOR PATHOLOGY INVESTIGATION

Introduction

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations the employer has a responsibility to assess the risks to health of the workforce by potentially hazardous substances. Therefore the Trust has a responsibility to ensure that staff or others are not placed at risk when specimens are packaged and transported for pathology investigation.

In relation to the types of containers in which specimens are transported, the Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road & Rail (Classification, Packaging & Labelling) and use of Transportable Pressure Receptacles (CDG-CPL) Regulations denote how goods must be classified packaged and labelled, and the volumes that may be transported of each.

Specimens are transported by a range of means, both in terms of transportation and personnel, including the air-tube system, internal portering & transportation and contract transport. However, whilst many specimens are only transported internally from wards/departments to the pathology labs, and consequently do not fall under the full requirements of the CDG-CPL, there is still a need to ensure that these are packaged and labelled appropriately.

Comprehensive guidance for the labelling of specimens and request cards for pathology investigation is contained at Appendix A. Guidance regarding the types and volumes of specimen containers available, and most appropriate container for different specimens, is contained at Appendix B. Guidance with regard to high-risk specimens is contained at Appendix C. If necessary refer to the foetal remains policy also.

General Statement

All specimens must be packaged, labelled and transported in a manner that complies with current legislative and Trust requirements, and does not place either the staff or members of the public at risk. Managers and staff are expected to do all that is possible to ensure adherence to safe systems of work in accordance with statutory requirements.

Areas of Applicability

This policy applies to all areas of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. The Primary Care Trusts within Leeds, Leeds Mental Health Trust, and General Practice Surgeries and others that are external customers to the Trust will be expected to comply with this policy, or formulate and follow their own policies - which must enable compliance with the Leeds Teaching Hospitals policy.

Management Responsibilities

The main duties of managers in respect of health and safety can be found in Section A5 of the Trust Health & Safety Manual.

Where managers are responsible for staff, and/or areas in which specimens or samples are taken for pathology investigation, they must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to enable staff to comply with this policy. They must also ensure that staff;

THE LEEDS TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

- Are aware of and understand the labelling requirements relevant to specimens from their area (Appendix A).
- Are aware of the most appropriate containers to use for packing and transport of specimens and their availability (Appendix B),
- Understand the risks presented to other staff of incorrectly labelled and packaged specimens.
- Are aware of the correct procedures for dealing with spillages - in accordance with Trust spillage procedures (Universal Infection Control Precautions & Trust Waste Policy) or phone Microbiology for advice.

Responsibilities of Employees

All staff are required to co-operate with the Trust management, through compliance with Trust policies and procedures, in order to ensure that the Trust is able to comply with its statutory responsibilities in regard to health and safety in the workplace.

In regard to specimen labelling, packaging and transport, staff are expected to:

- Ensure that all specimens sent for pathology analysis, for which they are responsible, are labelled in accordance with the labelling instruction contained at Appendix A.
- Ensure they are aware of the correct packaging requirements of all specimens which they routinely send for pathology analysis, in accordance with the guidance contained at Appendix B
- Inform their line manager of concerns in relation to the selection of packaging for specimens - for example when packaging new/different specimens,
- Contact the Pathology Office, number on request card, for advice if they encounter an unusual or non-routine sample.
- Be aware of the risks presented to other staff of incorrectly labelled and packaged specimens.
- Be aware of the correct procedures for dealing with spillages – in accordance with Trust spillage procedures or phone Microbiology for advice.
- Complete the assigned task by ensuring the despatch of the specimen to its intended recipient or, if necessary, ensure that it is stored appropriately until despatch.

Note: - It is particularly important in areas where bank or agency staff are routinely used that these staff are made aware of the requirements of the Trust.

Unlabelled or incorrectly labelled specimens WILL NOT be processed by Laboratory staff and will be reported as a RISK INCIDENT.