



MARYLAND
Department of Health

MEMORANDUM

To: All State and Local Health Departments
And Health Care Providers

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Subject: TB Specimen Submission Quality Assurance and Safety

Date: June 29, 2018

The Maryland Department of Health Laboratory Administration, TB Laboratory, is fully committed to assuring the quality of TB clinical specimen testing and the safety of all those who come in contact with these clinical specimens. Part of this commitment involves daily reviews of specimens received by the TB Laboratory. Based on these reviews, listed below are recommendations to decrease the rejection rate of leaking specimens, increase the quality of specimens, reduce the risk of cross contamination, and consistently meet best safety practices for laboratory and other affected personnel:

- 1) TB specimens that are collected and sent to the Maryland Department of Health TB Laboratory must be placed in two biohazard bags. The biohazard bag containing the specimen must be completely "zip-lock" closed in order to prevent any specimen leaking out of the bag. Specimens are not to be put in the biohazard bag sleeve. For further guidance, reference the Guide to Public Health Laboratory Services found here:

<https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/docs/Guide%20to%20PH%20Lab%20Serv%20v2.0.8%202018%20Guide%20Updated%204-2018%20Final.pdf>

- 2) Verify that the specimen tube lid is on straight (not crooked) and sealed tightly to prevent leaking of the contents.
- 3) The absorbent tissue included with sputum collection kits should be placed in the inner biohazard bag with the specimen tube. Its purpose is to contain the contents of the tube if there is any leakage.
- 4) Do not wrap or cover the specimen tube top with the absorbent tissue before closing the tube. This prevents the lid from closing properly, and the specimen may wick from inside of the tube to the outside via the tissue.
- 5) Please remove the collection instructions from the biohazard bag prior to putting a specimen in the biohazard bag.
- 6) Make sure all specimens have a completed requisition form and that the name on the requisition form matches the name on the specimen.
- 7) The specimen requisition form goes in the biohazard bag sleeve only. Never place it in direct contact with the specimen tube.
- 8) Do not send specimens directly on ice. The ice melting in transit can saturate and destroy the lab requisition.
- 9) At least 2 mL of fluid is required to perform a TB culture and smear for extra-pulmonary body fluids (pleural fluid, CSF, etc.). Submitting less than 2 mL decreases the TB Laboratory's ability to effectively culture the fluid specimen, as not all of the TB media used in a culture can be inoculated.
- 10) All specimens must be refrigerated while awaiting submission.
- 11) Please send specimens as close to the collection date as possible; do not "batch" specimens for submission. The TB Laboratory provides a courier service to all LHDs for this purpose.

Thank you for your assistance in striving for the highest levels in safety and quality laboratory testing, and please disseminate this memo to all those in your jurisdiction responsible for submitting specimens to the TB Laboratory. Do not hesitate to contact the TB Laboratory at (443) 681-3942 with any further questions or concerns you may have regarding TB specimen collection and transport practices.