Specimen Requirements

ID and Labeling Procedure

It is the responsibility of all personnel who collect lab specimens to properly label the specimens to assure accurate patient/sample identification. Specimens not labeled according to the following protocol should be considered suspect and will require follow-up actions.

Additional specimen collection/labeling requirements apply to specimens collected for immunohematology testing (blood bank). Refer to separate instructions within this section titled "Blood Bank Specimen ID/Labeling" for labeling of these specimens.

Additional specimen collection/labeling requirements apply to specimens collected for cytology and/or histology testing. Refer to the "Cytology Specimen Collection and Handling" and "Histology Specimen Collection Handling" sections of this manual for information about labeling specimens used for these tests.

Verify Patient Identification with Collection Request:

Verification of patient identification must be performed prior to specimen collection. After verification, the patient's name and request for services should be properly transcribed onto the specimen by the person(s) performing the specimen collection.

Positive Patient/Requisition Verification Involves One of the Following:

1. Patient verbally provides name and birth date that match information on the patient's attached ID band or HealthLab requisition and specimen labels. **Do not** ask the patient to confirm this information by requesting a yes/no response.
2. Patient's immediate family member provides patient's name and birth date that match information on the patient's attached ID band or HealthLab requisition and specimen labels.

Proper Labeling Requirements

The following information should be included on the primary container for each specimen. Requisition/specimen labels should be used when available.

1. Patient identification (complete LEGAL name or coded identifier as listed on HealthLab requisition).
2. Secondary patient identifier (birth date or CDH account number)
3. Specimen collection date and time
4. Collector's (phlebotomist's) name or initials

All blood should be labeled by the person who drew the specimen or directly witnessed the collection and confirmed the patient identification. Labeling of the specimen should occur immediately after the draw in the presence of the patient. All specimen labels should be visually verified by the patient or compared by the collector to the attached ID band or requisition.

Confidentiality in Specimen Collection and Processing

In cases of HIV testing, serologic testing for venereal disease, suspected child abuse or drug abuse for custody hearings or any case requiring confidentiality, we recommend that the physician's office "code" the HealthLab test requisition. The patient's name should not be used on the requisition.

Examples of possible "coding" techniques include using the patient's Social Security number or an internal numbering system corresponding with the chart. Please be sure to record the patient's name with the code number assigned and keep it available in your office. The test results will be reported with the assigned code instead of the patient's name.

In cases where the results may be used as evidence in court, the patient and a witness must verify that the "code" is actually the patient for record-keeping purposes.

Blood Bank Specimen ID/Labeling Instructions

Because clerical errors in specimen collection can lead to fatal transfusion reactions, the blood bank uses a unique, secondary system to identify possible transfusion recipients. Each patient is issued an identification band that contains a unique identifier consisting of three letters and four numbers.

The phlebotomist should call the blood bank prior to the collection of a blood specimen associated with a pre-banded patient to determine the necessary specimen collection procedure.

Labeling of Blood Bank Specimens for Compatibility Testing

Patients who are having specimens collected for type and crossmatch or type and screen testing are required to have a yellow blood bank identification bracelet. The blood bank bracelet is to be secured around the right wrist. Include the following patient information on the bracelet and specimen label:

1. Name (complete LEGAL name)
2. Medical record number (or date of birth)
3. Location
4. Date of collection
5. Time of collection
6. Initials of the phlebotomist who collected the specimen

If a patient already has been banded with a yellow blood bank bracelet, do not reband the patient. Add the medical record number and the unique blood bank ID number to the specimen label.

Pre-Admission Patients:

1. Determine if the patient has been pregnant or has received blood transfusions in the previous three months. If so, the specimen must not be collected earlier than 72 hours prior to the intended transfusion date/time.
2. Prepare a blood bank identification band as instructed. Place the completed label on the specimen tube and place the bracelet in an envelope with an instruction sheet.
3. Place one of the number stickers from the blood bank wristband on the patient routing slip.

NOTE: *Admitting personnel are to verify the wristband identification number on the routing slip and compare it to the wristband that is in the patient's possession at the time of admission. If the numbers match, admitting personnel are to affix the band to the patient's wrist. If the patient is unable to produce the identification bracelet at the time of admission or if the information does not match, a new specimen must be collected, a new wristband issued to the patient and the testing must be repeated.*

4. Complete a patient history form and forward it to the blood bank with the specimen.

Specimen Labeling Requirements for Blood Bank Tests Not Related to Compatibility Testing

Orders for a type/Rh, RhoGAM, prenatal testing, direct Coombs or indirect Coombs do not require the patient be banded; however, the tube must be labeled as follows:

1. Name (complete LEGAL name)
2. Medical record number (or date of birth)
3. Date of collection
4. Time of collection
5. Initials of the phlebotomist who collected the specimen

Discussion, Precautions, Limitations

1. Specimens must be labeled by the collector who confirmed the patient's identification or by a person who directly witnessed the collection and also confirmed the patient's identification.
2. Specimens must be labeled immediately after collection in the presence of the patient.
3. Acceptable specimen labels may be labels printed from the LIS/HIS, requisition labels or manually generated labels. When available, LIS-generated barcode labels should be used to label laboratory specimens.
4. No patient identification on the specimen should be altered or removed.
5. The patient must visually verify the information on the labeled specimen(s) or the collector must verify the information against the ID band or requisition.