

# Laboratory Policies

## Cancellation of Tests

Cancellation requests received prior to test setup will be honored at no charge. Requests received following test setup cannot be honored. A report will be issued automatically and charged appropriately.

## Patient Identification Accuracy

Proper identification of patient specimens is critical for good patient care, quality and safety. St Joseph Hospital is committed to National Patient Safety Goals regarding patient identification.

To be compliant, each specimen **must** be labeled with:

- Patient's full name (first, last, and middle initial)
- Date of birth or medical record number
- Date and time of collection
- Initials of person obtaining specimen
- Source of specimen for Microbiology and Pathology

It is important that the specimen be properly labeled with the same demographic information that appears on the requisition. If there is a discrepancy identified upon specimen arrival at St. Joseph Hospital, we will contact you to make you aware of the discrepancy and resolve the issue. The test(s) ordered may be cancelled. Only irretrievable specimens will be kept and tested.

## Outpatient Guidelines

- All laboratory test orders must be signed by the appropriate healthcare provider. All laboratory test orders must include diagnosis, signs/symptoms and/or ICD-10 code(s).
- All orders for laboratory work must be electronic or written. If verbal orders are necessary, they must be followed up with a written order within 24 hours.
- Upon arrival at the hospital, the patient should come to Laboratory Registration. Staff will key the patient and test information into the hospital information system.
- If specimens are dropped off at the laboratory for testing, specimens must be in a biohazard bag. (Bags may be obtained from the laboratory or most physician offices.)
- Advanced scheduling is required for the following tests. Please refer to the Laboratory Service Directory under the alphabetical test listing for days testing is offered.

- *Helicobacter pylori* breath test (sent out to Mayo Medical Laboratories)
- All tolerance testing (Glucose and Lactose)
- Semen analysis

## Rejected Specimens

The physician's office will be notified of any specimen rejection, and a request will be made to submit a new specimen. A written report will be sent with the reason for rejection. See "Unacceptable Specimens" below for more information.

- **Microbiology** - These guidelines are established to assure specimen integrity and accuracy of results. The following specimens are not acceptable:
  - Specimen submitted in a non-sterile container (except for stools).
  - Specimen grossly contaminated with foreign material internally and externally.
  - Specimen submitted on a dry swab, except for rapid strep.
  - Specimen submitted >24 hours after it was obtained, for example "Culture, GC (*Neisseria gonorrhoeae*)" or other fastidious organisms.
  - Specimen not properly labeled (see requirements above).
  - Specimen quantity is inadequate.
  - Stool specimen collected >3 hours prior and not refrigerated.
- Sputum specimen that appears to be mostly saliva.
- Unpreserved urine left at ambient temperature for >1 hour or refrigerated for >24 hours. Use yellow-top culture preservation tubes to prevent this issue.
- Wet prep not submitted in saline.
- Specimen submitted in expired transport media.

- **Parasitology** - These guidelines are established to assure specimen integrity and accuracy of results. The following specimens are not acceptable:
  - Wet prep specimen for *Trichomonas* which is not submitted in physiological saline.
  - Stool of patient who received barium within the previous 7 days.
  - Specimen which is dried out.
  - Stool specimen for ova and parasites which is not of sufficient quantity to perform the concentration and staining technique.
  - Specimen not properly labeled (see requirements above).
  - Stool specimen must be collected within 3 hours and refrigerated if not liquid; liquid specimen should be collected and delivered to the laboratory within 1 hour.
- **Pathology and Cytology** - Pathology specimens may be rejected for any of the following reasons:
  - Inadequate patient identification (name, date of birth, etc.).
  - No specimen in container.
  - Improper labeling or no label on container.
  - Inadequate preservation.
  - Requisition form missing information (ie, specimen source, insurance, etc.).

**Note:** When a specimen is rejected, the nursing unit or physician's office will be notified immediately so that a new specimen can be obtained in a timely manner. The specimen will not be discarded until a new specimen is collected. An exception may possibly be made for irretrievable specimens and other special circumstances, but only with physician's approval.

## Supplies

Mailing cartons, specimen vials, special specimen collection containers and kits, sterile vials, stool containers, and requisition forms are provided without charge upon request. These supplies are intended only to collect specimens which will be tested at St Joseph Hospital. Please fill out a Laboratory Supply Requisition form with location and ordering person, and allow 3-5 days for delivery.

## Unacceptable Specimens

Some specimens cannot be analyzed because of improper collection or degradation in transit. Other specimens may have prolonged turnaround times because of lack of necessary ancillary specimens or patient information. You will be notified of rejected or problem specimens upon receipt. To avoid specimen rejection, please check the on-line Laboratory Service Directory before collection. Note the following guidelines.

Are the following conditions correct?

- Full 24 hours for timed urine collection.
- Patient information complete as requested. It must include:
  - Full name (first, last, and middle initial).
  - Date of birth or medical record number.
  - Date and time of collection.
  - Initials of person collecting specimen.
  - Specimen source (for specimens other than peripheral blood).
- Patient/specimen properly identified (ie, name, source).
- Proper specimen container (metal-free, separation gel, sterile, etc.).
- Correct specimen type (plasma, serum, whole blood, etc.).
- Minimum specimen volume.
- Correct transport temperature (ambient, frozen, refrigerate).
- Transport medium.