

Policies-St. Mary's Regional Medical Center

Deleting Tests on Inpatients

Nursing will cancel the order if it hasn't already been transmitted to the laboratory. If the order has been transmitted or logged, nursing requests the cancellation and the laboratory staff needs to act upon that request by canceling the test in the computer. CALL the laboratory at 207-777-8400 to notify us of the cancellation.

Medical Necessity

Medicare pays for only those tests that are related to specific symptoms or disease states. Please provide complete diagnosis information (as many diagnoses as applicable) when ordering outpatient work. If there is reason to believe that Medicare will not cover an order, please counsel the patient and obtain an ABN.

Pathologist On Call

There is a pathologist on call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week for clinical consultation.

Requisitioning Tests

Laboratory tests are to be requested only on the written order of a physician or other authorized provider (physician assistant or nurse practitioner). A phoned-in order is accepted only if followed by faxed verification within 72 hours.

Orders are entered into the computer by providers or nursing service personnel (inpatients) or laboratory staff (outpatients). When the Carelink computer system is down, the nursing unit fills out a "Downtime" form listing which tests are being requested and delivers the form to the laboratory.

A few inpatient laboratory tests are ordered on requisitions as opposed to being ordered in the computer (histology specimens).

Specimen Acceptance or Rejection

All specimens (blood, urine, feces, surgical specimens, slides, culture specimens, etc.) must be labeled with patient's full name and date of birth (inpatient specimens can substitute the patient's account number for the date of birth), date and time of collection, initials of the person collecting the specimen, and type of specimen, if applicable. Specimens must be labeled in the presence of the patient at the time of collection.

Specimen containers whose outside surfaces become contaminated during collection must be disinfected before

being sent to the laboratory. If the requisition slip becomes contaminated, it must be discarded in the proper container and a new requisition made out. Specimens should be transported in a leakproof container (sealed plastic bag or other carrying container).

Outpatient specimens brought directly to the laboratory must be accompanied by written or faxed order (telephoned orders require fax backup) from the physician.

Any specimens not properly labeled or collected according to protocol will be rejected. The laboratory will notify the nursing unit or physician's office, and state the proper method of collection.

Specimen Collection Information

Valid test results require a properly collected, preserved, and maintained specimen. Specific instructions concerning specimen collection are included in the protocol for each test. Specimens that are grossly hemolyzed, lipemic, etc. may be rejected depending on the test ordered. In general, plasma or serum for chemistry tests should be separated from cells as soon as possible, but certainly within 2 hours. Plain red-top and serum gel tubes of blood should be kept in a vertical stopper-up position while clotting. This promotes complete clot formation and reduces agitation of the contents, which reduces the potential for hemolysis. Coagulation in plain tubes is usually completed in 30 to 60 minutes. Specimen tubes must be centrifuged with stoppers in place. Specimens should be centrifuged at 3,200 RPM for 10 minutes. If routine testing will not be completed within 2 hours of collection, serum gel tube(s) and plasma separator tube(s) should be stored at 2° C to 8° C after centrifugation. If specimen was drawn in a plain, red-top tube or a dark green (sodium heparin) tube and routine testing will not be completed within 2 hours, the serum/plasma should be aliquoted into a plastic tube, identified as either serum or plasma as appropriate, and sent refrigerated.

The laboratory collects blood specimens and voided urine specimens but does not collect swabs, nasal aspirates, catheterized urines, etc. Swabs (eg for culture or rapid strep screen), nasal aspirates, etc. are either collected by the nursing unit (inpatients) or physician's office for outpatients.

Specimens from Patients with Communicable Diseases

Specimens from all patients are treated as if potentially infectious.

All specimens from patients with known or suspected communicable disease such as tuberculosis must be collected by the prescribed isolation technique. The requisition must be labeled "isolation," and the diagnosis or suspected diagnosis must be noted on the requisition slip.

If sending a patient to the laboratory who is suspected of having an infectious airborne disease such as influenza or pertussis, please provide the patient with a mask to wear to help prevent disease transmission. COVID positive patients must be escorted to a phlebotomy room, register over the phone, be drawn in full droplet precaution gear and the room must be closed for an hour then cleaned.

Tests Ordered on Requisitions

Cytology and pathology tests are requisitions must be printed once the order has been placed in the computer. Make sure the following information is included on the form:

- Patient identification (demographics & insurance information)
- Test requested (check off all tests requested)
- Date and time of specimen collection
- Requesting physician
- Diagnosis
- Source and site of specimen