

NHS Lothian Specimen Storage Guide

In order to receive the best possible service it is recommended that you get the specimens to us as soon as possible, but where delays in transport are unavoidable then please see below. Please note any delay in testing can result in deterioration in the specimen and invalidate the results of any investigations carried out.

Specimens for room temperature storage should not be exposed to extremes of temperature e.g. placed in direct sunlight, near a heat source (e.g. radiator) or allowed to chill or freeze. Ideally, they should be kept in an insulated container between 20°C – 25°C.

These guidelines apply to the common laboratory test repertoire – please contact the appropriate laboratory for information relating to specific tests.

Tube Type/colour	Common Tests	Delayed Transport Storage	Additional Advice
Blood Science (Biochemistry, Haematology & Coagulation)			
Gel tube (Brown)	Electrolytes, LFT, Vitamin B12 & Folate,	ROOM TEMP	If POTASSIUM requested store at ROOM TEMP for up to 4 hours. If routine Biochemistry tests do not include POTASSIUM then refrigerate. If sample transport delayed >12 hours then POTASSIUM measurement will not be possible.
Li Hep (Orange)			
Serum (White)	INR, Coag Screen		Please ensure tube is filled correctly
Citrate (Green)	Glucose	Refrigerate (2-8°C)	
FLOX/oxalate (Yellow)	FBC, HbA1c		
EDTA (Red)	ESR		Please ensure tube is filled correctly
ESR (Purple)	ACR, PCR,		
URINE	Blood Group		Requests for Cold Agglutinin MUST not be stored in refrigerator. Please contact laboratory for advice.
BTS			
Microbiology			
Blood Culture		ROOM TEMP	
Skin Scraping	Mycology		
Swabs		Refrigerate (2-8°C)	
Urine			
Others			
Pathology			
Biopsy Specimens		ROOM TEMP	Biopsy specimens to be placed in and covered by 10% neutral buffered formalin and stored at room temperature in yellow topped pot.
Products of Conception	Also biopsy for cytogenetic testing	Refrigerate (2-8°C)	Products of conception which includes ectopic pregnancies (or any other biopsy which should be kept fresh and not placed in formalin as this could compromise further tests such as cytogenetics).
Skin *			Skin for Immunofluorescence should be kept fresh and not placed in formalin .