

Policy

Subject: **Return of Tissue to Patients**
Approval Date: August 2009, August 2013, December 2018
Review Date: December 2022
Review By: Anatomical Pathology Advisory Committee
Number: 1/2009

1. Purpose

This policy describes principles for laboratories to comply with requests from patients and next of kin for return of tissues following pathology testing.

2. Scope

Laboratories should have established protocols to permit compliance with patient requests for the return of body parts / tissue / prosthetic devices and includes pregnancy tissue to those for whom there is personal significance, while minimising any risks to patients and others from infection and toxic chemicals.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The legitimacy of the requesting person must be established and documented.
- 3.2 Before releasing the tissue specimen the patient should be counselled (with or without assistance from a social worker in cases of pregnancy tissue) with regards to retention and disposal of the specimen.
 - 3.2.1 Formalin is classified as a Category 8 Dangerous Goods and the dangers of formalin as a chemical should be explained.
 - 3.2.2 The specimen should not be disposed at the “garbage tip”, etc. If buried in the garden, it should be sufficiently deep to prevent retrieval by animals.
 - 3.2.3 Tissue can only be returned in compliance with State, Territory and Federal regulations.
- 3.3 The release of the specimen to the patient and summary of the advice given to the patient should be documented.

Patient copy - Part 1

Information For Patients Requesting the Return of Formalin Fixed Tissue Samples

This HUMAN TISSUE has been treated with a preservative chemical (10% BUFFERED FORMALIN). This had to be done so that the tissue could be tested in the laboratory.

The TISSUE has been washed in water to REMOVE MOST OF THE PRESERVATIVE CHEMICAL, but still **must be handled with extreme care.**

Very limited handling is advised:

Please be advised that the tissue may have a strong chemical **smell** and that close proximity to the specimen can cause irritation to the **eyes** from the vapours and any contact with **skin** could cause minor irritation.

Breathing in the chemical vapour from the tissue can also cause irritation to the **nose and throat.**

In addition you are advised that all human tissue is potentially infectious and should be handled with appropriate precautions.

Handling Instructions:

We advise that disposable latex gloves be worn, if you intend to handle the tissue. After handling any tissue samples dispose of the gloves immediately in the garbage and wash your hands with plenty of soap and water and dry carefully with a disposable paper towel.

Disposal Instruction (as per Health Department Guidelines)

- The tissue , if buried , must be placed in a hole at least 1 metre (3 feet) deep.
- The tissue must not be buried on the fence line, near public water ways, or in public areas such as parks.
- The tissue may be returned, if you wish, to the laboratory for disposal.

Please contact the **Laboratory Manager** at the address above.

Laboratory copy Part 2
Patient Receipt and Release

Patient

Name _____ **MRN:** _____

Laboratory number _____

The tissue or material returned _____

Patient Receipt of Specimen

I, _____

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have read the above information and have received a copy of the Handling Instructions.

Signed: (Patient) _____

Date: _____

- D The patient has agreed to dispose of the tissue by an approved method or return the specimen to our department for disposal.
- D The patient has been instructed on the nature of the tissue fixation and the handling procedures.

Department Representative _____

Date: _____