



TRACE ELEMENTS SPECIMEN COLLECTION GUIDE

Analysis for trace elements at ARUP is performed in a clean laboratory environment that includes a system of positive-pressure and HEPA-filtered air. Since detection limits for many trace elements are calculated in parts per billion, this helps minimize environmental contamination of specimens. Additionally, contamination control during specimen collection provides more accurate and clinically useful results.

Note: Refer to the ARUP Laboratory Test Directory for specific instructions when collecting specimens for cadmium exposure testing (td.aruplab.com/tests/pub/0025013).

Urine Collection

Although it is nearly impossible to obtain a completely uncontaminated urine specimen, steps can be taken to greatly minimize environmental contamination.

- Avoid collecting the specimen in an area where environmental contamination is likely to occur. In an industrial or construction setting, it is important that clothing worn in the workplace be removed prior to specimen collection to prevent dust on the clothing from contaminating the specimen.
- Wash and dry hands thoroughly prior to collection.
- Use a clean plastic container for collection.
 - The container(s) must not have metal caps or glued inserts.
 - The container(s) should not be colored due to metals found in dyes.
- Minimize contamination of the sample by avoiding contact with the inside of the container or lid.
- Do not use preservatives, as they may cause contamination. Refrigeration is sufficient to preserve specimens.
- Transport urine in trace element-free transport tubes (ARUP supply #43116).
- Pour the collected specimen directly into the transport tubes. Do not use utensils (i.e., syringes, needles, or pipettes) in the collection or transfer of the sample.

SPOT COLLECTION

- First-morning urine is recommended for a spot or random collection.

24-HOUR COLLECTION

- **Do not urinate directly into the 24-hour collection container. Collect urine in a clean plastic container and then carefully pour into the 24-hour collection container.**
- Minimize contamination by avoiding contact with the inside of the container or lid.
- Wrap 24-hour collection container in a clean polyethylene bag between collecting samples to prevent potential contamination from dust.
- **If possible, keep 24-hour collection container refrigerated during collection.**

Whole Blood, Serum, and Red Blood Cell Collection

Materials comprising the tube and the tube top are a consideration. Rubber stoppers in collection tubes other than the royal blue tube are known to contain elements that can contaminate a specimen. Contamination can be introduced as the needle punctures the stopper in a tube other than royal blue. Most of this also holds true for transport tubes. A sterile tube is not necessarily a trace element-free tube.

PREPARING FOR COLLECTION

- Avoid collecting the specimen in an area where environmental contamination is likely to occur.
- Use only stainless steel needles and nonpowder gloves when handling and collecting.

- Wash the collection site with soap and water, followed by an alcohol swab. Studies indicate that using alcohol alone is not as effective at preventing trace elements contamination. Do not use disinfectants containing iodine.
- When multiple blood specimens need to be collected from one patient, the trace elements sample should be the first tube collected. The stopper from other tubes may contaminate the phlebotomy needle.

WHOLE BLOOD

- Collect samples in a royal blue EDTA tube (ARUP supply #16313). Use a Microtainer with K2EDTA for capillary lead specimens only. EDTA is the preferred anticoagulant over heparin because heparin is only effective for 24–36 hours.
- Invert the tube 8–10 times to prevent clotting.
- Avoid opening the tube as it may introduce contamination.
- If pouring off, do so in a clean environment, and use the trace element-free transport tube (ARUP supply #43116). These transport tubes come precapped to avoid contamination. Remove the cap just before pouring off and replace immediately.
- Do not use utensils (i.e., syringes, needles, or pipettes) in the sample tube.
- Specimen can be transported in the collection tube. Never transport specimens in glass collection tubes.

SERUM

- Collect samples in a royal blue serum tube (ARUP supply #16359). This tube contains a clot activator. Glass tubes from other manufacturers should not be used when testing for aluminum.
- Invert the tube 8–10 times to mix the clot activator with the blood.
- Allow the specimen to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes and then centrifuge immediately.
- Pour serum into a trace element-free transport tube (ARUP supply #43116) within 2 hours of collection.

RED BLOOD CELLS (RBCs)

- Collect samples in a royal blue EDTA tube (ARUP supply #16313). EDTA is the preferred anticoagulant over heparin because heparin is only effective for 24–36 hours.
- Invert the tube 8–10 times to prevent clotting.
- Centrifuge and remove plasma.
- Transfer plasma-poor RBCs to a trace element-free transport tube (ARUP supply #43116) within 2 hours of collection.
- Specimen can be transported in the collection tube. Never transport specimens in glass collection tubes.

Tissue

- Follow information on individual pages of the laboratory test directory.

TRACE ELEMENTS WHOLE BLOOD, EDTA, AND SERUM COLLECTION TUBES

