

Handling Specimens

This section contains information about the following tasks:

- Labeling specimens
- Packaging specimens
- Storing specimens

For the most up-to-date information, see the [Specimen Handling](https://www.mayocliniclabs.com/specimen/index.html) web page on the Mayo Clinic Laboratories website ([Mayocliniclabs.com/specimen/index.html](https://www.mayocliniclabs.com/specimen/index.html)).

Labeling a Specimen

To label a specimen, follow these steps:

1. Hold the bottom of the specimen container in one hand.
2. Remove the label from the backing paper.
3. With the label facing you, position the label vertically as close as possible to the top of the container as shown.



- **Vials** – Ensure that the letter indicating the specimen temperature is on the bottom of the tube.
 - **Urine bottles** – Ensure that the letter indicating the specimen temperature is on the bottom left corner when the bottle is upright.
4. For frozen specimens, place a small amount of transparent tape around the edge of the label where the temperature is displayed to make sure that the label remains attached to the specimen container.

Note: To avoid scanning problems, do not tape over the bar code on the label.

Packaging Specimens

Each batch sheet lists the specimens that can be grouped in one package or bag. If a batch has more than one batch sheet, include all specimens for each batch sheet in one package. Do not place more than one batch sheet in a package.

To package specimens, follow these steps:

1. Gather the specimens listed on a batch sheet.
2. Fold the batch sheet in quarters.
3. Place the batch sheet in the outside pocket of the appropriate shipping temperature bag with the address of the performing laboratory and the bar code, which are located in the upper right corner of the batch sheet, facing outward.

Important: Make sure that the patient information is not visible.

4. Store the packaged specimens in the appropriate storage location.



Storing Specimens

After labeling and packaging specimens, place the package in a storage location that maintains the appropriate temperature for all the specimens in the package. The specimen and batch sheet labels show the required storage temperature as follows:

Temperature Code	Temperature
A	Ambient (room temperature)
F	Frozen
R	Refrigerated
M	Miscellaneous Note: Miscellaneous is used when multiple specimens include different sources that impact the preferred specimen temperature or when specimens are being sent to an outside reference laboratory that requires different specimen temperatures from Mayo Clinic Laboratories. Contact Mayo Laboratory Inquiry at 1-800-533-1710 to learn how to send specimens with miscellaneous temperatures.