
PERSONAL PROTECTIVE MEASURES

BL.SA.SM.014.r00

Introduction

All personnel who enter a laboratory and engage in activities requiring protective measures are required to comply with the following precautions. This includes all laboratory staff, medical staff, students/residents/fellows, and any vendor service or sales representative. It is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a "clean area" in a laboratory with different operations being carried out over three shifts. Therefore, if contacting surfaces in a laboratory (e.g. phones, keyboards, bench tops and doorknobs) without gloves, hands must be washed before leaving.

Purpose

To outline general PPE requirements for laboratory staff. See specific PPE details in laboratory sections procedures.

Closed Specimens

1. Because of the unpredictable nature of specimen collection, the outside of a specimen container is likely to be contaminated, even when blood is not visible.
2. Wear gloves when handling a specimen, whether open or closed. A band-aid is not an adequate barrier if the hands become wet or if the sample spills or breaks in the hands.
3. A specimen container which is visibly contaminated with blood, body fluids, or other tissues: Clean with fresh 10% bleach (made daily) or other hospital-approved agent. Do this at the time of collection or upon receipt in the laboratory.
4. Bagged specimens may be handled without gloves, face shields or gowns.
5. Closed specimens may be transported from lab to lab or within a laboratory without being bagged, but gloves must be worn. See Gloves (p.2) for transportation procedure. Racks of open specimens must be bagged or covered to prevent splashing or aerosolization when transporting, even a short distance.

Protective Clothing and Devices

Lab Coats

1. All employees engaged in testing activities must wear fluid barrier gowns/lab coats. Anyone not engaged in testing or handling specimens is not required to wear a gown/lab coat.
2. Lab coats must be impervious to fluids and no shorter than mid-thigh in length. Lab coats may be worn only covering down to the hips in some laboratory areas (i.e. Anatomic Pathology). Aprons do not protect the arms, and are not acceptable.
3. Lab coats that are worn within the laboratory are NOT to be worn in patient care areas. If an employee is participating in a procedure within a patient care area, a separate (clean) Lab coat must be worn. Store "Lab" coats and "Patient Care" coats separately.
4. Proper wearing of Lab coats:
 - a) Cover the wrists with the cuffs of the sleeves
 - b) Fasten collar

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5. Remove Lab coat prior to exiting the laboratory. Lab coats are NOT to be worn to bathrooms, break rooms, cafeteria, etc. It is acceptable to leave a gown/lab coat on if traveling to a different section of the laboratory within the same area.
6. Store Lab coats within the laboratory. Do NOT store in personal lockers or within unapproved drawers/cabinets within the laboratory.
7. Change Lab coats when visibly soiled, or, at least, once per week.

Gloves

1. When handling a specimen container of blood, body fluids, or tissue, wear gloves.
2. As a general rule, all items within the laboratory should be considered contaminated (ie, "dirty") and all offices should be considered "clean". Gloves are to be worn when touching or working with equipment within a contaminated area, and not worn when using "clean" items. It is up to the individual laboratory sections to specifically designate what items are "dirty" and what are "clean". This includes instruments, PC's, phones, and specific areas within a laboratory including offices. Door handles leading to a clean area will be universally designated as **clean**, and one should NEVER access these door handles with gloved hands. This does not apply to doors between dirty areas.
3. Do NOT wear gloves outside of the laboratory. The only exception is with the transportation of a specimen from one laboratory area to another. It is appropriate to remove one glove to open a door handle, while leaving the other glove on to hold the specimen.
4. There are certain specific instances where gloves are not required. Refer to the specific laboratory sections' safety policies for specific details.

Eye Protection

Chemical splash goggles are to be used for any process that involves acids, bases, or any other chemical where there is any high risk of a splash.

Face Protection

1. When handling an open container of blood, body fluid, or tissue, face protection is required. This may be in the form of a wearable face shield or a splash shield that is fixed in position on the bench or instrument, or goggles in conjunction with a surgical mask that covers the nose and mouth.
2. Do NOT take wearable face shields outside of the laboratory once used.
3. Face shields are not required when handling routine culture plates or tubes (i.e. Microbiology).

Additional precautions appropriate to individual sections, such as the use of a biological safety cabinet, that have been defined in the Clinical Pathology Blood Borne Pathogen policy are not superseded by this policy and remain in effect.

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Personal Items

1. Do not store personal items, such as coats, sweaters, etc. within the laboratory.
Employees are provided areas to store personal articles while they are working. Individual laboratory sections can designate discrete areas within the laboratory where employees can store valuables (purses, etc) if they so choose. These areas should not be labeled as to attract theft.
2. Do NOT store or consume food or beverages in specimen testing areas or in areas where specimens or reagents are stored, i.e. "dirty" areas.

Authorized Reviewers

This procedure is monitored by the Beaumont Laboratory Safety Committee.

Laboratory Safety Officer
Chair, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
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