



# Holyoke Medical Center

<b>RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:</b> Laboratory	<b>POLICY #:</b> 401.ADM.5.02	<b>PAGE:</b> 1 of 4
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Reporting of Critical Values	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> 08.1992	
<b>REVIEWED/ REVISED:</b> see table below		
<b>DISTRIBUTION:</b> ALL LABORATORY EMPLOYEES		

**Category 3**

## REPORTING OF CRITICAL VALUE RESULTS

### Purpose

To provide guidelines to standardize the reporting (and documentation thereof) of laboratory test results that are classified as "critical".

### Principle

It is the policy of the laboratory to call either a registered nurse (RN) for house patients or physician's office personnel in the case of out-patients should a test value fit the criteria of a "critical value". A "critical value" is defined as a "laboratory result which represents a pathophysiological state at such variance with normal to be life-threatening, unless some action is taken in a very short time and in which the state may not be readily detectable or highly suspected by the clinical physician". The notification call should occur within 15 minutes of obtaining the "critical result".

### Procedure

1. In the case of in-house patients, notify a R.N. In the case of an outpatient, notify the ordering physician's office staff. Obtain the user mnemonic (for in-patients) or name (first and last name) of the person taking the report. Never leave the result with the answering service. Explain to the service that there is a "critical value" to report and ask to have the physician return the call. Record the time of the call for documentation purposes.

2. Clearly state that the value being reported is a "critical value".  
State the test result and have the R.N. / physician office staff "read back" the test result.

The R.N. will then be responsible for assessing the patient's condition, collecting relevant data and notifying the physician.

**NOTE:**

If a provider for an Outpatient does not return the call within 30 minutes, call again indicating the urgency of contacting the physician. If the call is not returned after an additional 30 minutes:

- a. Check computer for the patient's Primary Care Provider and call him/her with the critical result.
- b. Call pathologist on call to determine the next step.

**Documentation**

Laboratory

1. Note the time and date of the call, the mnemonic or full name of the individual to whom the result was reported and your initials in the computer using the Meditech canned Text comment "CALLCRIT" in the "Result Comment". ("Result Comment" allows the statement to appear on the report; "Interpretation" must be used in the MIC module.) Also, document that nursing staff read the report back.

Sample: "Mary Smith notified on 4/30/97 at 13:25 that calcium was 15.0 by SBM. Result read back."

2. Utilize a specimen comment to:

Internally document all attempts to contact the provider; include time/date stamp. In order to ensure that the comment is internal, use the @ symbol in front of each line of text.

## Nursing Service

The licensed caregiver must document the following information:

Date and time of notification:  
Person notified of results (name):  
Critical value:  
Result was read back to lab staff:  
Patient status:  
Intervention outcome:

### **Procedure Notes**

- Refer to Addendum A for the list of critical values.
- It is the responsibility of the technologist verifying the critical test result to notify the appropriate personnel (R.N. for in-patients and physician office staff for out-patients) within 15 minutes.
- It is the responsibility of the person taking the results to convey the critical information to the appropriate personnel.
- It is the responsibility of the person taking the results to read the result back to the lab personnel; this must be documented in both the lab and nursing (for in-patients).

### **References**

Baer, D.M., "Panic Values for Drug Levels", MLO, April, 1982, p. 17.

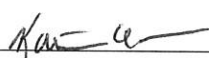

Duckworth, J.K., "Panic Values: Indispensable to Patient Care", MLO, August, 1977, p 35.

Jacobs, David S. MD, FACP, FCAP, "Laboratory Test Handbook", 4th Edition.

Hudson(Cleveland) LEXI-COMP, Inc. 1996

Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors, "Communicating Critical Test Results", July 2005.

College of American Pathologists, "Laboratory General Checklist", GEN.41320, 41330, 41340, August 2017.

Approved By:	 MT (ASCP)	5.14.18
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Associated Procedures: All copies of the Laboratory Policy Manual, Laboratory Directory of Tests and Services, Clinical Policy C3.568.

**Supersedes:**

Reviewed:

Date	Manager	Date	Manager

Revision History			
Version	Summary of Changes	Author	Date
14	Added 3 bullet regarding specimen comment	Pouj	05/04/18