



Specimen Transport Guide

Packaging, handling and transportation requirements

This guide provides requirements for the safe, compliant, and timely transport of specimens to the PURELAB-UK Laboratories to ensure sample integrity and accurate results. Various transport systems can be used, covering long or short distances.

Transport Types

Scheduled Overnight Large Specimen Transport via UPS	Postal Pack via Royal Mail
PURELAB-UK Couriers (within London)	Other external courier providers in partnership with PURELAB-UK

General Guidance

- Ensure that all specimens are labelled with at least three patient identifiers prior to transportation.
- Complete request forms fully, including clinician details, specimen type, collection date and relevant clinical information, along with any relevant consent forms.
- Keep request forms separate from specimens first layer sample bag to prevent loss of form in the event of leakage.
- Package specimens to prevent leakage, contamination, or damage during transit following UN3373 Guidance. See detailed guidance below.
- Transport specimens as soon as possible following collection.
- Report any leakage, breakages or transport incidents immediately to PURELAB-UK Customer Service Team
- Use approved transport containers and couriers only.

Packaging & Transport Guidance

UN3373 - mandatory packaging requirements

In all instances, it is a mandatory requirement to follow UN3373 guidance when transporting specimens classified as "Biological Substance, Category B."

Compliance with these regulations ensures safe transport, protects staff and couriers, prevents delays in specimen processing & possible loss of specimens.

Regardless of mode of transport UN3373 Packaging must be followed.

UN3373 requires a triple packaging system

All UN3373-labelled specimens must be packaged using the following three-layer system:

1	Primary Container A leak-proof specimen container with a secure closure.
2	Secondary Packaging Each case/pot/tube must be placed in an individual, durable, leak-proof sealed bag e.g. DGP pathoseal 95 bags. Loose plastic bags that are hand tied or placing pots directly in the transport bag are not sufficient. The seal must be able to hold any leak that may occur. Include enough absorbent material to fully contain any potential leakage, i.e. absorbent padding in each sealed specimen bag.
3	Outer Packaging Additional absorbent material and padding or protective material must be placed inside the transport bag around the specimens, to absorb any leakages and fill the transport bag. This prevents the containers from shifting during transit and reduces the risk of damage or leakage.

Responsibility for Compliance

It is the sender's responsibility to ensure specimens meet UN3373 packaging and labelling requirements. Non-compliant submissions may compromise safety, risk regulatory breach, and delay patient diagnosis.

Examples of acceptable and unacceptable packaging can be found below. If you require further information, please contact the laboratory. Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining safe and compliant specimen transport.

UN3373 Packaging Examples

NON-COMPLIANT

-  specimen bag not adequately sealed
-  no absorbent material in specimen bag
-  no additional packaging to fill empty space

COMPLIANT

-  specimen pot placed in full sealed specimen bag
-  absorbent material in specimen bag
-  large pot in upright position
-  absorbent material at base of transport bag
-  Specimens placed in upright standing position
-  additional padding and absorbent padding to fill empty space

Further information on UN3373 guidance: [Packaging and transport requirements for patient samples - UN3373 - GOV.UK](#)

Discipline Specific Guidance

Histology Specimens

- Place tissue samples in appropriately sized leak-proof containers.
- Use adequate fixative, typically 10% neutral buffered formalin, unless otherwise instructed.
- Container and request form details must match exactly.
- Large specimens should be securely sealed and transported upright.

Cytology Specimens

- Ensure slides are protected from breakage using suitable slide mailers.
- Fluid samples must be tightly capped and transported in leak-proof containers.
- Include relevant clinical history and specimen site.

Blood Sciences Specimens

- Use the correct tube type and fill to the indicated volume.
- Mix samples gently where required by inversion.
- Separate urgent samples and clearly mark priority requests.
- Observe any temperature or transport time requirements for specific tests.

Important: Failure to follow transport requirements may lead to delays, sample rejection, or compromised results.