

Diagnostic Laboratory Services

AMMONIA SPECIMEN COLLECTION TIP SHEET

Updated: September 22nd, 2023

1. Collect the lavender top specimen (fill completely) in prechilled tubes (preferred).
2. Place the specimen on ice immediately and keep the tube tightly stoppered at all times.
3. **Specimens must be delivered to the lab (on ice) promptly** to allow for processing within 15 minutes of collection. Specimens not delivered on ice will be rejected.
4. Collect before initiating TPN (lipid interference).
5. **Hemolyzed specimens are unacceptable.** If called about gross hemolysis, consider the following:
 - **Hand walk specimens to the core lab**
 - Rationale: Specimens travel through the pneumatic tube system at greater than 6 G-forces!
 - [Click here](#) to watch a specimen traveling via the pneumatic tube system
 - **Avoid “milking” heel sticks**
 - Rationale: Excessive milking or squeezing of the puncture site can result in an unsatisfactory specimen because hemolysis breaks down the blood cells to be analyzed or mixing tissue fluids in the specimen, which can dilute the blood.
 - **Use the correct gauge needle, typically 21 to 22-gauge for most patients**
 - Rationale: Using smaller needles can increase RBC stress or turbulence during collection, leading to hemolysis
 - **Fill lab tubes with the correct volume indicated on the lab tube**
 - Rationale: Filling the tube completely ensures the proper ratio of blood to the additive to prevent hemolysis and clotting

Please page the Clinical Chemistry attending on-call with any questions at 615-837-4257.