



## Packaging and Transporting Blood Samples

The HSE defines samples of blood collected from humans to be considered, as a **Category B infectious substance**. It is the responsibility of those dispatching specimens to the laboratory to ensure that these samples are sent in accordance with national guidelines and/or local policies for the packaging, labelling and transport of biological material. Samples should be packaged in such a way that under normal conditions of carriage they cannot break, be punctured or leak their contents and that they maintain patient confidentiality.

Diagnostic specimens should be packed in accordance with packaging instructions PI650 and UN3373 regulations. For further information on these guidelines, please see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/blood-borne-viruses/transportation-of-infectious-substances.htm>

### An Overview - How to Package the Blood Sample

Transport of infectious substances requires a basic triple packaging system. It consists of three layers as follows:

- **Primary receptacle** - a primary watertight leak-proof receptacle containing the specimen. The receptacle is packaged with enough absorbent material to absorb all fluid in case of breakage.
- **Secondary packaging** - a second durable, watertight, leak-proof packaging to enclose and protect the primary receptacle(s). Several cushioned primary receptacles may be placed in one secondary packaging, but sufficient additional absorbent material shall be used to absorb all fluid in case of breakage.
- **Outer packaging** - secondary packaging is placed in outer shipping packaging with suitable cushioning material. Outer packaging protects contents from outside influences, such as physical damage, while in transit. An outer packaging of adequate strength for its capacity, mass and intended use.
- The sample and referral form should be sealed separately in a grip seal bag to prevent contamination of paperwork in the event of leakage. Each package must be clearly and duly marked with a label showing the characters UN3373 and "diagnostic specimen" or "clinical specimen". For further information please see the national postal regulations.



Alternatively, a ready-made solution to this is available from the Royal Mail - A Royal Mail Safebox™

Further details see <https://www.royalmail.com/business/shipping/parcels/safebox>

**Please note** - NCJDRSU is supplying this information as a brief overview, not as complete advice / instructions. The safe and correct transport arrangements are the responsibility of the sender.

Samples that are potentially infectious should be packaged in line with UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Transport of Dangerous Goods Regulations. Find out more about [transporting dangerous goods](#) on the HSE website.