

Correct Specimen Labeling

Introduction

This tip sheet describes the process for correctly labeling a lab specimen. If the label is not applied properly, the lab cannot scan the barcode correctly.




Why

Bedside label printing using electronic positive patient identification is going live at HUP on July 22, 2025. New bedside printers will no longer support smaller “footie” labels that are placed on microtainers. Staff must follow the below instructions when labeling specimens.

Correct Label Placement:

- Place the label vertically along the tube.
- Patient name placed nearest to cap.
- Be sure to leave a window for the lab to see the specimen.
- Do not place the label horizontally (no flagging).
- Do not place the label over the cap.
- Do not let the label extend past the end of the tube if possible*.
 - ***Microtainer** label may be longer than tube. See the example below

Examples of Correct and Incorrect Labeling:

LABEL PLACEMENT	
<p>Vacutainer Label Placement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place labels on vacutainer longitudinally. • Do not cover the cap. • Leave a window to visualize the specimen. Lab staff need to be able to see the specimen. • Barcode needs to be unobstructed. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <div style="background-color: #4f81bd; color: white; padding: 5px; display: flex; align-items: center;"> ✓ Correct Positioning </div>  <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Place labels on vacutainers longitudinally leaving a window to visualize the specimen</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <div style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 5px; display: flex; align-items: center;"> ✗ Incorrect Positioning </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;">  </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.7em; margin-top: 5px;"> ✗ Clear area Covered ✗ Label Flagged ✗ Label Too Low ✗ Label Too High </div> </div> </div>	<p>For Microtainers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place label longitudinally. • Allow the extra length to extend off the bottom of the tube. • Do not pinch label. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>