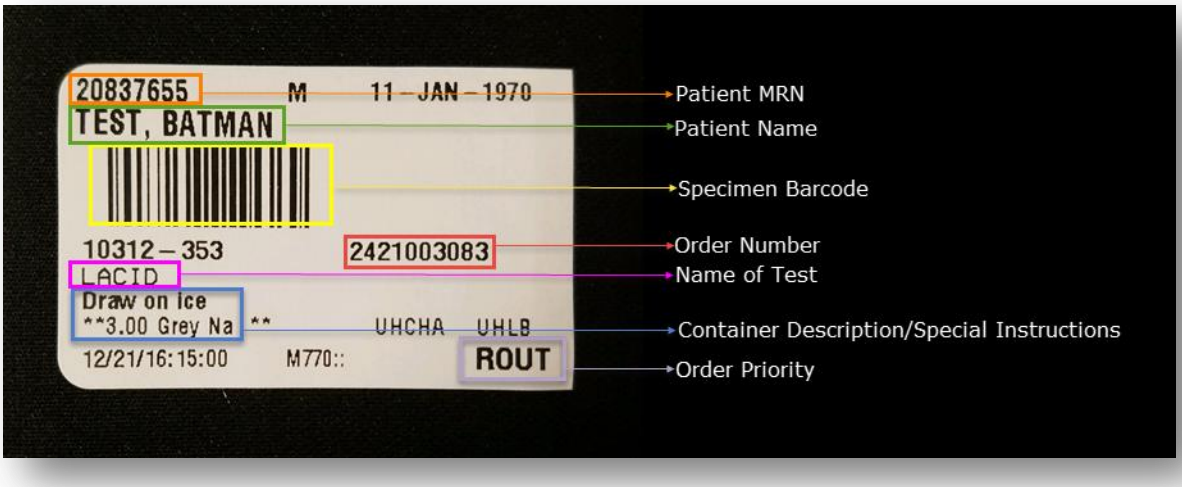
University Health System

Pathology Services

How to Label a Specimen Tube Correctly

Ideally, when placing a label onto a specimen container, we would like to be able to see the following important information.



In addition to being able to see this information, we want to efficiently process the specimen and if applicable, place it on the appropriate instrument for testing. This process can be streamlined by following the proper labeling procedure.

The **CORRECTLY LABELED** tube will appear as follows:

The specimens label will be applied smoothly (no wrinkles) and straight (not crooked) onto the surface of the tube.

The side of the label with the patient name should be placed closest to the cap of the tube.

The back of the tube will leave an area that makes it possible to see the amount of specimen in a tube.

The following are examples of **INCORRECTLY LABELED** tubes. For every tube with bad labeling, a new label must be printed and the specimen must be relabeled.

This causes a patient safety concern since any re-label is a potential for mislabel.
Improper labeling also cost processing time and extends turn-around-times for results.

WRINKLED LABEL
This potential covers patient identifiers or test information. An instrument cannot scan this barcode.

UPSIDE-DOWN LABEL
An instrument cannot scan this barcode to determine patient or test information when the label is placed upside down.

SIDEWAYS LABEL (with a flag)
An instrument cannot scan this barcode to determine patient or test information. The excess label "flag" off to the side makes this difficult to load into a carrier.

LABEL COVERING CAP
An instrument cannot scan this barcode. If it is a test that requires the cap to be removed, this action is made difficult due to label placement.

CROOKED LABEL
An instrument cannot scan this barcode to determine patient or test information.

SIDEWAYS LABEL (with overlap)
This potentially covers patient identifiers or test information. An instrument cannot scan this barcode.

FOLDED LABEL (with flag)

An instrument cannot scan this barcode to determine patient or test information. The excess label "flag" off to the side makes this difficult to load into a carrier.

SMALL LABEL

An instrument may have issues reading this barcode. A small label is sometimes sent as an extra tube. This requires staff to look up and see if this tube still needs to be tested or if it is an extra. This slows processing time or may lead to duplicate testing.

In summary, please take the extra couple of seconds to ensure that the label is placed correctly in order to save time in the long run and improve the turn-around-time for results.