

Tip of the Month



Spotting a Winner

To ensure the blood-spot specimens you collect are spot-on, make sure you don't spot trouble by committing any of these ten mistakes:

Top Ten Reasons Newborn Screening Specimens are Rejected

1. <i>Expired collection card</i>	In most cases, newborn screening forms serve as the patient's test requisition <i>and</i> collection device. As such, make sure expiration dates are observed.
2. <i>Clerical problems</i>	Review patient/specimen information for accuracy and completeness prior to collection and submission so that patient demographics on the form aren't incomplete, illegible, or conflicting.
3. <i>Quantity not sufficient (QNS)</i>	The inability to obtain a sufficient amount of blood may occur for several reasons, including not prewarming the infant's heel prior to collection. Inadequate blood flow may result in incomplete filling of the test circles or uneven soaking of the blood.
4. <i>Tissue fluid present</i>	Excessive squeezing of the heel during collection increases tissue fluid in the specimen, resulting in poor specimen quality. Tissue fluid contamination may appear as serum rings on the filter paper and prompt specimen rejection.
5. <i>Improper application of specimen</i>	In an attempt to submit completely filled circles, collectors may layer drops of blood within a test circle or apply drops of blood to both sides of the filter paper. To prevent specimen rejection, fill each circle from one side of the card with one large blood drop.
6. <i>Filter paper damaged</i>	Scratching of the filter paper can occur when capillary tubes are used to apply the blood. Damage can also occur if the card is bent to the newborn's heel during collection.
7. <i>Blood spots damaged by unknown substance</i>	Avoid touching the test circles before, during and after collection. Contamination can also occur if the test card comes into contact with other substances, i.e., glove powder, sprays, aerosols, lotions, water, or other blood spots.
8. <i>Blood collected through IV line</i>	Due to the risk of contamination and dilution of the sample, do not collect blood from the same line used for infusing fluids/medications.
9. <i>Inadequate drying of blood spots</i>	Blood specimens should be allowed to air dry for at least three hours at room temperature. Blood spots should not be heated, stacked, or allowed to touch other surfaces during the drying process.
10. <i>Improper packaging/shipment</i>	Moisture and humidity are enemies to specimen quality. Never package specimens in plastic zip-closure bags that trap moisture. Mail/ship specimens according to facility protocol within 24 hours of collection.

. When properly collected, you haven't just filled circles with blood; *you've spotted a winner.*