

Specimen Considerations:

Medication Administration or Peak/Trough Levels: Reference ranges for therapeutic drugs are often based on the time the specimens are drawn in relation to the time of the drug administration. If a drug level is available as either a peak or trough level, follow the specimen timing guidelines available in the NPL test catalog. A trough drug level is generally drawn before a medication is administered. A peak drug level is drawn at a certain timed interval after the medication is administered. Specimens submitted for analysis should be clearly marked as “peak” or “trough”.

Fasting: Abstinence from eating or drinking (except water) for at least 8 hours is required for most fasting specimens. Some tests require a 12-14 hour fast. If a test has specific fasting requirements, the requirements will be outlined in the test catalog. The patient should not smoke or chew gum during the fasting period. Medications should be continued as normal, unless the provider has instructed the patient otherwise.

Serum or Plasma: Draw enough blood in the appropriate tube(s) to deliver sufficient serum/plasma volume, usually 2.5 times the amount of serum/plasma requested.

Whole Blood: Draw sufficient blood in a specimen collection tube with the indicated anticoagulant for the test(s) ordered. Fill the tube to its vacuum capacity to ensure the proper blood-anticoagulant ratio. The specimen should be transported in original tube unless otherwise recommended. If for any reason, a portion of the sample has been removed for the tube prior to transport to NPL, this should be noted on the specimen and the requisition to eliminate sample cancellation due to what would appear to be improper fill levels.

Platelet Poor Plasma: Specific requirements for obtaining platelet poor plasma are under the specific tests it applies to in the test catalog.

Protect From Light: Some tests are sensitive to light and the component may disintegrate or increase when exposed to light. Special amber colored transport tubes are available, or the tube can be wrapped in tinfoil or paper towels for protection.