

**GUIDELINES for the COLLECTION of SPECIMENS for TOXICOLOGY POST-MORTEM**

*(Note biological samples intended to be analysed for alcohol, drugs or poisons should be stored in a refrigerator if such storage is envisaged to be less than 72 hours. If the likely storage exceeds 72 hours then they should be stored in a freezer)*

Eurofins Forensic Services recommends the use of kits approved for forensic use. The following offers guidance on suitable containers for sampling all of which are present in the kits generally available from forensic suppliers.

FLUID/TISSUE	SAMPLING and GENERAL ADVICE	USE	RECOMMENDED PACKAGING
Blood (30mls)	Blood should be obtained from a suitably isolated peripheral site (e.g. femoral vessels). It should not be obtained from the heart or body cavities. If these latter sites must be used then the laboratory MUST be advised.	General screening for drugs	30mls capacity plastic Universal container with a screw cap. <i>(Do not fill more above ¾ full as expansion during freezing can lead the container to rupture).</i>
Blood (5mls)	Shake the vial thoroughly after the blood is placed into the vial to enable distribution of the preservative	Alcohol and volatiles analysis	Fluoride oxalate vial with a septum cap (avoid hospital fluoride oxalate containers as they often have insufficient of the preservative) <i>(Do not fill more above ¾ full as expansion during freezing can lead the container to rupture).</i>
Urine (5mls)	As above	Alcohol and volatiles	As above
Urine (30mls)	If the urine is a sample obtained from a catheter inserted in life then the lab must be advised.	General screening notably where there is a delay to death or sampling	30mls capacity plastic Universal container with a screw cap. <i>(Do not fill more above ¾ full as expansion during freezer can lead the container to rupture).</i>

Stomach Contents	Obtain the entire contents and weigh at the mortuary. If greater than 25 grammes then place the contents in the 1L plastic container and shake. Immediately remove a 25 gram aliquot and place into a 30 millilitre capacity sample jar. Submit the aliquot but advise the laboratory of the total weight present within the stomach	General screening, particularly in rapid deaths where drugs may not have had sufficient time to absorb into the blood	1 litre screw capped plastic container
Liver	A section of around 20-30 grams is sufficient	Rarely required but can be useful where there is limited blood and urine	30mls capacity plastic Universal container with a screw cap. <i>(Do not fill more above ¾ full as expansion during freezer can lead the container to rupture).</i>
Injection Sites	A 6-8cm square area of tissue from the suspected injection site plus a control sample from an equivalent site remote to it (e.g. if the suspect site is in the left arm then a similar area of the right arm)	Testing for the drug of interest (usually identified in the blood) to assess if the suspect area is an injection site	Sealed screw cap plastic container

**Note: Cases involving decomposing bodies should be discussed with the toxicology division prior to sampling as the samples available will be variable on the state of decomposition.**

**If in doubt about any submissions for toxicology then contact Eurofins Forensic Services (01772 312620) who will be pleased to provide advice.**