

# SPOTfocus

## Newborn Screening Quality Improvement Hints

*One of the top Reasons for Unsatisfactory Newborn Screening Specimens:*

### SPECIMEN APPEARED CONTAMINATED OR DISCOLORED

Examples of specimens that were deemed unsatisfactory due to a contaminated or discolored appearance



In 2015, over **1,490** newborn screening specimens were rejected because the specimen appeared **discolored or contaminated**. All of these specimens required a redraw and caused critical delays to testing.

*Need tips on how to avoid this type of rejection?*

*Read on next page!*

## TIPS TO AVOID A CONTAMINATED OR DISCOLORED SPECIMEN

- Do not store specimens near areas where food, beverages or other possible contaminants are kept.
- Do not allow filter paper to come in contact with alcohol, antiseptic solutions, water, hand lotions or powders. Avoid excessive handling of the specimen collection form. If necessary, handle with clean gloves avoiding the circle collection areas.
- Do not use capillary tubes for specimen collection.
- Before collection, after collection site has been cleaned, wipe area DRY with sterile gauze pad.
- Avoid “milking” or squeezing the heel.
- Only allow minimal contact between filter paper and heel. Allow blood to soak through filter paper without manipulation.
- Do not expose blood spots to direct heat or sunlight.
- Air dry specimen for 3 to 4 hours on a flat, nonabsorbent surface in a horizontal position before mailing (do not hang specimens to dry, do not dry specimens vertically on edge, and do not lay specimens to dry such that the blood specimen is in direct contact with any surface).
- Do not place specimens in sealed plastic bags.

### *Why is a specimen that appears contaminated or discolored rejected?*

*Contaminants can interfere with the test method and discoloration indicates an uneven application of blood on the filter paper, both can cause inaccurate test results.*

### *Other Helpful Resources*

General newborn screening specimen collection questions: [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/nbs\\_collect\\_reqs.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/nbs_collect_reqs.shtm)

Special circumstances in newborn screening collection: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/nbsSpecialC.shtm>

Healthcare Provider Resources: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/nbsHCRes.shtm>

DSHS Newborn Screening Laboratory Contact: Email [NewbornScreeningLab@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:NewbornScreeningLab@dshs.state.tx.us) or call 1-888-963-7111 ext. 7585

#### **Monthly Newborn Screening Facility Report Cards**

Find the required forms, here: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/nbsRDSforms.shtm> to set up an account with the Texas Newborn Screening Web Application in order to gain access.