

NURSING SERVICE GUIDELINES EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Guideline: Toxicology Studies



Policy Number Superseded:

Responsibility: ED Registered Nurse (RN)

Effective Date:

October 2023

Purpose of Guideline: To provide a guideline for obtaining toxicology studies; to determine the necessity of specific treatment for any intoxication whose etiology is not easily detected on physical examination.

Initial Effective Date:

July 2005

Procedure:

- (A) Toxicology ordered by the physician for diagnostic purposes/evaluation.
- (1) Toxicology studies are to be obtained on each patient who presents to the ED who has been involved in a vehicular accident and on any patient where there may be a suggestion of drug or alcohol overdose. Patients who present to the ED for the sole purpose of requesting a blood alcohol level must be registered and treated as an ED patient. Requests by law enforcement officers to draw blood for toxicology must be honored and will be performed by the ED attending physician, RN or paramedic. This requires a search warrant, and the patient does not have to consent to collect. If they consent, a search warrant is not necessary.
 - (2) The venipuncture site is to be prepped with betadine or normal saline. ALCOHOL PREP AN ALCOHOL-BASED PREP MUST NOT BE PERFORMED.
 - (3) The following specimens are to be obtained:
 - (a) Blood - 10 ml placed in a heparinized tube.
 - (b) Urine - all urine obtained from the patient.
 - (c) Gastric contents - all gastric contents obtained from the patient.
 - (4) Label the tubes with the patient's name and medical record number which is on the patient sticker.

- (5) Document on the toxicology slip, the time the specimen was obtained, and who performed the venipuncture.
 - (6) Specimens obtained from patients involved in vehicular crashes or patients with intoxications whose etiology is undetected on physical examination are obtained as a therapeutic measure and a signed consent is NOT necessary.
 - (7) The results of toxicology studies are confidential and are not to be released by Emergency Department personnel. The only time an Emergency Department employee may release toxicology results is upon presentation of a search warrant which specifically delineates the release of toxicology results and is signed by a judge.
 - (8) Requests by law enforcement officers for toxicology results may be obtained through the medical records department, after appropriate release forms have been signed.
- (B) Toxicology requested by law enforcement officers.
- (1) The law enforcement officer will read the consent for blood alcohol and/or drugs to the patient and request the patient sign the consent form.
 - (2) The ED attending, RN or paramedic may witness the patient's signature on the consent form.
 - (3) Upon the signed consent of the patient, the ED attending, RN, or paramedic will perform the venipuncture:
 - (a) Prep the venipuncture site with betadine or normal saline. DO NOT USE ALCOHOL OR AN ALCOHOL-BASED PREP.
 - (b) Perform the venipuncture.
 - (c) Place the blood in a heparinized tube and label appropriately with patient name, time of venipuncture, and name of person performing venipuncture.
 - (d) Secure the tube of blood by sealing it in the chain of evidence box.
 - (e) Keep the original consent form with the medical record and send a copy to the lab with the blood.
- (C) Toxicology requested by the coroner.
- (1) Obtain specimen by prepping the venipuncture site with betadine or

normal saline.

- (2) Perform venipuncture and place blood in a heparinized tube.
 - (3) Label the tube with the patient's name, medical record number, date and time specimen obtained, and name of the person performing the venipuncture.
 - (4) Secure the tube and handle as evidence. Follow the chain of custody form.
 - (5) Forward sealed package with tube to the laboratory, unless otherwise directed by the coroner.
 - (6) Document on the patient's medical record.
- (D) Toxicology requested by patients.
- (1) Generate an Emergency Department medical record for the patient.
 - (2) Be cognizant that there is a two (2) hour window in which the blood ETOH should be drawn.
 - (3) Patient must be seen by the Emergency Department attending and toxicology ordered by the attending doctor.
 - (4) Obtain specimen by prepping the venipuncture site with betadine or normal saline.
 - (a) Perform venipuncture and place blood in a gray colored tube.
 - (b) A urine specimen is sent for toxicology.
 - (c) Label the tube with the patient's name, medical record number, date and time specimen obtained, and the initials of the person performing the venipuncture.
 - (d) Send specimens to the lab via the tube system.

Approved by:

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