SFHPCS17

Receive and handle clinical specimens within the sterile field

Overview

This standard covers receiving clinical specimens collected during operative procedures.

The specimen may be required for investigation, diagnosis, autologous donation or transplant purposes.

You will be working in a 'scrubbed' role whilst undertaking these activities.

All actions and decisions should be carried out in accordance with current legislation, organisational policies, clinical protocols, and professional standards.

Users of this standard will need to communicate effectively to meet individuals' needs and wishes and work in line with health and safety legislation, policy and practices

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

P1. identify and agree the roles and responsibilities of yourself and others in receiving and handling clinical specimens within the sterile field

P2. identify and minimise hazards and risk in the workplace

P3. confirm the practitioner's requirements for the type of clinical specimen to be collected and that relevant consent has been obtained

P4. ensure the correct transport medium and container are available for the type of specimen being collected

P5. receive and handle the specimen correctly and safely in line with organisational policies and procedures

P6. label the specimen correctly and clearly with all relevant information, as directed by the relevant practitioner

P7. promptly clarify any uncertainty over requirements for handling and dispatch with a relevant practitioner

P8. dispatch the specimen to the correct destination for investigation in accordance with workplace procedures.

P9. complete all relevant documentation required for receiving and handling clinical specimens within the sterile field

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

K1. the current legislation, local guidelines, policies, procedures and protocols which are relevant to your work practice and to which you must adhere

K2. the scope and limitations of your own competence, responsibilities and accountability as it applies to your job role

K3. how to access and interpret all relevant work instructions and information

K4. specific procedures for reporting issues which are beyond your competence, responsibilities and accountability

K5. the hazards and risks which may arise during the execution of your work role and how you can minimise these

K6. the correct use of any equipment and PPE to protect the health and safety of you and others

K7. the principles, practice and procedures associated with informed consent

K8. the types and action of pathogens specific to the individual, wound infection and potential contamination of clinical specimens

K9. the potential consequences of contamination of the clinical specimen

K10. the different types of container and transport media for specimens for:

- histology
- haematology
- microbiology
- cytology
- biochemistry
- autologous donation
- transplant

K11. specific requirements for handling and transporting different specimen types in order that they arrive in a suitable condition for investigation

K12. the potential hazards and consequences related to incorrect labelling or dispatch of specimens

K13. special requirements relating to handling frozen sections, and the practitioner's role in dealing with such specimens

K14. the practitioner's role in monitoring, reporting and recording information relating to clinical specimens and how this links to other members of the care team

K15. the role of diagnostic support services in relation to clinical specimens

K16. how to complete records and reports required for receiving and handling clinical specimens within the sterile field in accordance with organisational requirements

SFHPCS17

Receive and handle clinical specimens within the sterile field

Developed by	Skills for Health
Version Number	3
Date Approved	12 Feb 2026
Indicative Review Date	12 Feb 2031
Validity	Current
Status	Original
Originating Organisation	Skills for Health
Original URN	SFHPCS17
Relevant Occupations	Health and Social Care, Health and Social Services Officers, Health Associate Professionals, Health Professionals, Health, Public Services and Care, Healthcare and Related Personal Services
Suite	Perioperative Care Support
Keywords	Perioperative, care, receive, handle, clinical, specimens, sterile