



Date: April 17, 2020
To: All Inpatient and Outpatient Care Areas, Operating Rooms, and Emergency Departments
From: Alberta Precision Laboratories – Transfusion Medicine
Re: Blood Component and Product Handling for Contact and Droplet Precautions

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Messages:

- Concerns have been raised about the possibility of blood components and products, and the containers in which they are transported, being vectors for transmission of COVID-19.
- Infection Prevention and Control Contact and Droplet Precautions should be followed at all times when handling blood component and products.
- Disinfectants **must not** be used on blood component bags.

Why this is Important:

- In order to prevent the spread of infection, appropriate measures must be taken for the handling of blood components and products
- There is significant potential for blood shortages during the pandemic, and it is essential to preserve the limited blood supply. **Blood component bags are gas permeable and must not be exposed to chemicals such as disinfectants.** Use of disinfectants on blood components and products leads to unnecessary wastage.

Background:

In consultation with Infection Prevention and Control, Alberta Precision Laboratories – Transfusion Medicine recommends handling of blood components and products (referred to in Epic as: blood products and derivatives) for Contact and Droplet Precautions as follows:

- COVID-19 infection prevention and control practices are the same as for influenza-like illnesses (ILIs). Hand hygiene and proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is key.
- Single units or vials of blood components and products:
 - Should only be requested and taken into the patient's room when a transfusion is required and the patient is ready for transfusion (per AHS Transfusion of Blood Components and Products Procedure PS-59-03 – Section 4)
 - If they must be returned, the blood component or product should be returned to the Transfusion Medicine (TM) laboratory as per routine policy and procedure.
 - **DO NOT** use disinfectants (e.g. CaviWipes™) on blood component bags.
- Blood transport systems:
 - Pneumatic Tube System (PTS) carriers and associated packaging materials (where used) should not enter patient rooms.
 - Plastic transport bags (where used) should not enter patient rooms.
 - Coolers/blood transport boxes (where used):
 - Should remain in the anteroom (where available), or outside of the room or OR theatre. Only remove units as needed for transfusion.



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- If the cooler/blood transport box must be brought into the patient's room or OR theatre for urgent or emergent transfusions (e.g. massive hemorrhage), leave in a 'clean' area at least 2 meters away from the patient (ex. charting area in OR) with the lid(s) closed; and only remove units as needed for transfusion.
 - For hard plastic-sided coolers, clean the outside of the cooler with an AHS-approved disinfectant (ex. CaviWipes™) prior to returning to the TM laboratory.
 - Do not clean the inner coolant rings (phase change material) if blood components are still inside.
 - For blood transport boxes with Styrofoam inserts, the exterior can be cleaned with AHS-approved disinfectants. Styrofoam inserts, cardboard baffles, and carrying straps will be discarded by the TM laboratory if visibly soiled.
- In the event that a blood component or product, or the blood transport container has been contaminated, notify the TM service at your site, so that appropriate measures are taken upon its return.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

Patricia Boutilier, Manager, Transfusion Medicine South Sector Patricia.Boutilier@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

Richelle Miller, Manager, APL Transfusion Medicine North Sector Richelle.Miller@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

Provincial Transfusion Safety Officers transfusion.safetyteam@ahs.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Davinder Sidhu, MD, FRCPC, Section Chief, Transfusion Medicine, South Sector

Dr. Susan Nahirniak, MD, FRCPC, Section Chief, Transfusion Medicine, North Sector