

MLS Laboratory Update: Newborn Screening Specimen Cards Arriving This Week

MARCH 27, 2023

Dear Newborn Screening Submitter,

The long awaited 6-spot newborn screening specimen cards have arrived at the Public Health Laboratory and will be shipped out to you this week. Included in the card shipment will be updated Fact Sheets and Infographics that we'd like you to begin using in tandem with the new cards.

As you may have heard previously, with the addition of cCMV to our newborn screening panel, we reached the need to add another spot to the filter paper card. There will be 2 filter paper portions of the card and a total of six spots will need to be collected.

We know that laboratory and nursing staff sometimes find collection of screening samples challenging and they may question the increase in sample volume. This juncture is a good time to review heel-stick procedures and techniques to make collection more successful. A review of CLSI standards for collection and a video demonstrating proper technique are available on the MDH website at [Newborn Screening Information for Providers: Blood Spot Collection - MN Dept. of Health \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/newbornscreening/providers/collection.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/newbornscreening/providers/collection.html).

- Newborns are better hydrated and easier to draw after they have begun to nurse. Waiting until the baby has been fed several times often makes collection easier.
- While warming the heel improves blood flow, it is helpful to keep the whole baby warm. Leaving the baby swaddled and slipping just the foot out of the blanket can improve blood flow.
- Have gravity be your ally. Let the baby's foot dangle lower than the heart. Many baby cribs can be propped or angled to allow better foot position.
- It can be distressing to hear a baby cry, especially for new parents who may be present at the collection. Some nurseries offer Sweetees or other forms of sugar to stop the baby's cries. This practice may be counter-productive for blood collection. When babies cry, they often redden because blood is coming to the surface, this increased blood flow may make it easier to collect the specimen quickly and allow the baby to be calmed and comforted sooner.

With the addition of cCMV screening, additional precautions should be taken when collecting newborn screening specimens. Researchers suggest that contamination of the spot can lead to false positive screens for CMV. Sneezing, coughing, or touching the card after handling body fluids can inoculate the specimen with CMV. Since the filter paper is very absorbent even a small amount of virus can be absorbed and be amplified by the PCR. Universal precautions should minimize this risk.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with you in the life-saving work of newborn screening. Please feel free to contact Heather Brand at 651-413-5005 or heather.brand@state.mn.us with any questions regarding the card shipment.

Sincerely,

Jill Simonetti

Newborn Screening Program Manager

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