



RICKETTSIAL DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY

Specimen Submission Guidelines

Collection and Submission of Skin Biopsy Specimens

A punch biopsy specimen of a rash or eschar lesion can be used to diagnose rickettsial diseases using one or more diagnostic techniques, including polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assays, cell culture isolation, or immunohistochemical staining.

The optimal specimen is a punch biopsy of skin greater than or equal to 4 mm that includes the central aspect of the lesion (macule, petechia, or eschar).

- For cell culture isolation, samples should be obtained either 1) prior to initiating appropriate antibiotics (doxycycline), or 2) within 24 hours of initiating appropriate antibiotics.
- For PCR, samples should be obtained either 1) prior to initiating appropriate antibiotics (doxycycline), or 2) within 72 hours of initiating appropriate antibiotics.
- **Never delay antibiotic treatment for the biopsy procedure.**

Submit:

- **To submit fresh tissue**, lightly moisten a sterile gauze pad with sterile saline and place the specimen on the pad. Package in a sterile specimen collection cup. **Do not immerse the tissue in liquid.** Package with dry ice for overnight delivery to CDC.

Or

- **To submit formalin-fixed, paraffin-embedded tissue blocks** for immunohistochemical testing, contact CDC's Infectious Diseases Pathology Branch at pathology@cdc.gov for pre-approval.

Contact rbrefdxlab@cdc.gov for questions about collecting and submitting fresh tissue specimens for rickettsial diagnostics.



Shipping Details

See specimen submission guidelines for shipping details:
www.cdc.gov/vector-borne-diseases/media/pdfs/FS_RickettsialSpecimenSubmissionGuidelines-508.pdf