



What happens to blood and tissue samples taken during treatment?

This leaflet is for patients consenting to operations or investigations and explains what happens to samples of blood, cells and tissue that may be taken during those procedures. The main purpose of the samples is to make diagnoses and monitor treatment but there are other uses of samples and tissues within the hospital. We respect your interest in what may be done with these samples and have provided this leaflet to help answer any questions.

What happens to the samples?

During your visits to this hospital samples of blood and other fluids may be taken and analysed in our pathology laboratories. If you have a surgical operation or a biopsy pieces of tissue and, sometimes, whole organs may be taken out. These are usually sent to and analysed in our laboratories, and diagnosed by consultant pathologists. Similarly fine needle aspirations and surface smears of tissues are analysed by pathologists.

Sometimes, your samples may be sent to another hospital or medical institution for analysis, to seek a second opinion on the diagnosis or to request a test that we cannot do in this hospital. Your tissues, samples and personal information will be treated as confidentially there as they are in this hospital.

Many samples, and particularly the tissue samples, are often kept in the hospital laboratory archives for many years (and even for your lifetime and beyond) and comprise part of your medical record. Thus they can be reviewed and discussed by this hospital's clinicians and pathologists as part of your medical care now and in the future.

Tissue and fluid samples will remain after the analyses are completed and we may use these in quality assurance, education and research. These uses lead to the maintenance and development of medical knowledge and to improvements in health care for everyone.

Use of your tissues

In addition to making the diagnosis of your condition your donated tissues and samples may be stored and used for:

1. Medical education and training relating to human health.
2. Clinical audit for the development of better laboratory tests for diagnosis.
3. Quality assurance of technical standards in diagnostic laboratories and the assessment of the diagnostic performance of pathologists.
4. Public health monitoring of certain conditions.

The conditions for using your tissues and samples

For teaching and training uses your identity may be evident to those involved but all our staff and students are obliged to hold all medical and personal information in strict confidence in order to protect you.

All the other uses of your tissues are made anonymously and no other doctors or laboratory workers, either in this hospital or outside, will be able to identify you from these samples and their diagnoses.

It is possible that during an educational exercise a significant change may be made to a diagnosis in retrospect. In these circumstances it is essential that anonymisation is reversible in the interests of your care.

Future research uses

Your stored tissue may be used for research in connection with disorders or the functioning of the human body that may benefit other patients in the future. If your tissues are used for research they will be anonymised and the research project will have been approved by an Ethics Committee. If you would like to donate your tissues for a specific research project please contact the Research and Development Manager who will be able to talk to you about current projects.

As part of research requirements, there may be a need to send a pathology tissue sample from your biopsy and / or surgery to the trial centre for central analysis.

As part of the research process, please be aware there is a small risk that during transportation and the use of your tissue sample for research purposes the sample may be lost or obliterated, which could potentially result in no further tissue samples being available locally at the Royal Berkshire Hospital for any future testing. Please speak to your hospital doctors or research team contact for more information or if you have any questions or reservations.

Disposal of tissues

Ultimately, if there is surplus material from your samples and tissues are left over after the diagnostic processes which are not wanted for any of the purposes indicated in this leaflet, this material will be disposed of legally. The usual method is by incineration.

It is the policy of this Trust that tissue samples are not returned to the patient. This is to protect the health and safety of patients, staff and the public.

However, if your operation involves the removal of a limb, or another significant part of your body, that you would like to have returned to you (or to have re-united with your body in the unlikely event of your death in hospital), please discuss this with your doctor when the consent form is being completed.

And finally....

The principles in this leaflet are consistent with current guidelines from the Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Pathologists (Nov 2012). Their final conclusion is quoted as follows:

“The use of clinical samples for teaching, training, clinical audit, quality assurance and other aspects of laboratory management and development is an integral and critical part of the

practice of pathology. This is not direct clinical care, nor is it research, but it is a vital extension of the everyday practice of pathology now and for the future. This argument represents a justification for not needing consent for the use of residual material in ways that are essential to the running of the health service. The work benefits every patient who chooses to use the NHS and whose samples are sent to the laboratory for analysis and diagnosis, leading to effective treatment and care”.

Useful information

- Royal Berkshire Hospital switchboard Tel: 0118 322 5111
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Mortuary 0118 322 7743 (Mon-Fri 8am-4pm excluding Public Holidays)
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Bereavement Department 0118 322 7059 (Mon-Fri 8am-4pm excluding Public Holidays)
- Human Tissue Authority Tel: 0207 269 1900 <https://www.hta.gov.uk/>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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