

Handling of Very Small Tissue Fragments

(13.14 Small Specimen Handling); Created August 3rd, 2021 by Jeremy Deisch, MD

- **General Principle:** For very small tissue samples (i.e. “minute biopsies”), extra grossing steps are mandated to reduce the risk of specimen loss. If these steps are followed properly, in most cases diagnostic material can be retained for examination. Please follow the steps below when dealing with very small (typically 0.1 cm or smaller, also specimens with translucent or friable tissue fragments).

- **Specimen Handling Steps:**
 - Confirm with supervising PA or Pathologist the nature and size of the tissue size to confirm diminutive nature (and that no additional tissue fragments are adherent to lid, telfa pads, etc)
 - Document with whom the specimen gross was reviewed with (dictate as case note)
 - For small specimens (~ 0.1 cm) comprising relatively solid tissue fragments:
 - Place tissue fragment(s) on tissue paper
 - Ink specimen with single drop of carbol fuchsin (aids tissue embedding and sectioning)
 - Wrap specimen carefully in tissue paper (follow video instructions for proper folding)
 - Place a blue cassette sponge (typically used in GI biopsy handling) over folded tissue paper
 - Close lid securely
 - Dictate detailed specimen handling. Add “tissue is very small, and may not survive processing” to the gross dictation.
 - For very small tissue fragments (< 0.1 cm) or those comprising friable tissue (i.e. those with a very high risk of loss during processing):
 - Leave tissue and fixative in specimen container
 - Photocopy requisition - on copy, write “please make cell block on specimen _”
 - Place both copy of requisition and the specimen container in the cytology bin, in the refrigerator in accessioning
 - Dictate “specimen is very minute and friable, processed for cell block to ensure tissue preservation” in the gross description.