

Anatomical Pathology Block and Slide Retention

The provincial Anatomical Pathology Advisory Group has reviewed current clinical Pathology retention practices across the province and compared the data to other provincial and international guidelines resulting in a recommended standardized retention time for blocks and slides.

Retention time: 20 years from the date, the specimen is received.

Pathology sub sections:

- Histology - all tissue specimens
- Cytology (exfoliative, fine needle and gynecologic [PAP])
- Autopsy (hospital and coroner)

Patient age:

Retention time applies to all patients, regardless of the age of the patient at the time of receipt of the specimen. There is no longer a requirement to retain for an extended period, blocks and slides generated on patients under the age of majority (19 years). This removes the needs to separate or sort blocks and slides prior to disposal.

Pathology material:

- paraffin/plastic embedded tissue blocks
- all glass slides generated from the tissue block
- all glass slides (frozen section, smears, touch preps, cytospins, thinprep, and mounted filters) generated from original specimen
- gynecologic PAP smears - Positive smears (any abnormality \geq ASCUS)

Exceptions:

Retention time can be determined by the pathology site based on specimen viability, storage capacity, and clinical need.

- Frozen tissue blocks: i.e. muscle blocks for enzyme histochemistry testing or skin biopsies for direct immunofluorescence testing.
- Tissue section slides produced using procedures that generate an unstable end product: i.e. fluorescent in-situ hybridization (FISH).
- Gynecologic PAP smears – negative smears retained for seven years only.

Review History:

Date	Reviewer	Changes / Edits
June 26, 2018	J. Tunnicliffe	Logo change from BCCSS to PHSA