



Helping You Identify Quality Laboratory Services

Selecting quality health care services for yourself, a relative or friend requires special thought and attention. The Joint Commission has prepared this information to help you make your selection. Knowing what to look for and what to ask will help you choose a laboratory that provides quality care and best meets your needs.

Although you may not always have the opportunity to choose the laboratory where your tests are processed, you can obtain some important information about the laboratory. By doing so, you'll have confidence that your tests will be performed properly. Begin by asking your doctor why he/she selected the laboratory and then discuss specifics about the quality improvement processes the laboratory has in place.

General questions

- What is the name and location of the laboratory?
- What criteria did your doctor use to choose the laboratory?
- Does the doctor have confidence in the accuracy of the test results?
- Does the laboratory notify the doctor if a specimen is incorrectly collected? What is the follow-up procedure?
- Has the doctor ever received an incorrect result from the laboratory? How did the doctor handle the situation?
- How are complaints about inaccurate test results handled?

Questions about sample collection

- Are you given instructions about how to prepare for the lab test (for example, no eating or drinking)?
- Does the laboratory give your doctor clear instructions about how to properly collect specimens? Is this information included in the office staff's orientation and training materials? Is it periodically updated?
- If you are collecting the specimen yourself, did you receive clear instructions?
- When the specimen was collected, did the technician use two identifiers to label the sample collection containers in your presence?

Questions about the test results

- How soon can you expect to learn the test results?
- How will you be informed of test results? Will you receive a personal phone call if there was an abnormal test result?
- Is there a number you can call if you have questions?

Quality oversight

- Is the laboratory accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body such as The Joint Commission? Joint Commission accreditation means the organization voluntarily sought accreditation and met national health and safety standards.

Additional questions and considerations are included in another consumer brochure called "Speak Up: Help Prevent Errors in Your Care," available on the website. Click on the files for the Laboratory program.

To find out if the laboratory you are considering is accredited by The Joint Commission, see Quality Check[®] on this website or at www.qualitycheck.org. Quality Check is a comprehensive guide to all Joint Commission accredited health care organizations and programs.

Quality Check provides Quality Reports that include information on the organization's overall performance level and how it compares to other organizations nationwide and statewide in specific performance areas. If a report is not available on Quality Check, or if you would like a printed copy, please call the Customer Service Center at (630) 792-5800.

To report information or concerns about accredited organizations:

- Call or e-mail our Office of Quality Monitoring (800) 994-6610 or complaint@jointcommission.org.