

## Useful numbers

- Royal Berkshire Hospital switchboard  
Tel: 0118 322 5111
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Mortuary  
0118 322 7743
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Bereavement Department  
0118 322 7059 (Mon-Fri 8am-4pm)
- Human Tissue Authority  
Tel: 0207 269 1900
- Child-Death Helpline  
Tel: 0800 282 986
- Child Bereavement Trust  
Tel: 01494 446648

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust  
London Road  
Reading RG1 5AN  
Telephone 0118 322 5111  
[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

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Review due: May 2020

# Return of tissue in formaldehyde

Health and safety  
information for patients  
and relatives

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This leaflet contains advice about handling tissue that has been preserved in formaldehyde. This includes material which has come from a person's body in the course of receiving medical treatment, undergoing diagnostic testing (e.g. biopsies), participating in research or any relevant material which has come from a human body and ceases to be used, or stored for use, for any scheduled purpose

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The tissue that is being returned to you has been fixed in a solution containing formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is a harmful substance and must be handled and disposed of according to current Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations (COSHH). It is harmful if inhaled or swallowed. Even vapour may cause irritation of skin and eyes and the mucous membranes of nose, mouth and throat. First aid for skin

contamination requires the area to be immediately flushed with water for at least 15 minutes and medical attention to be sought if necessary.

To minimise any potential effects and to remove the need to dispose of the formaldehyde solution, the tissue has been well washed in water. The tissue has then been sealed in plastic bags and placed in a sealed, rigid container for transport.

These actions ensure that the risk of formaldehyde exposure is minimised; however, it should be recognised that the tissue may still be capable of transmitting infection.

You may wish to see the tissue, in which case you should open the rigid container in a well ventilated area. However, the plastic bag containing the tissue should not be opened

under any circumstances. Reseal the rigid container after viewing. Disposal of human tissue is subject to a number of Acts of Parliament, Statutory Rules and Orders and, therefore, you are advised to seek advice from funeral directors, cemetery staff, and/or local environmental health officers for the lawful disposal of such tissue.