

## Block and Slide Retention Guidelines

Retention time is calculated from the date the specimen is received. It applies to all patients, regardless of patient age. There is no longer a requirement to retain blocks and slides for an extended period when the patient is under 19 years of age. Retention time can be determined by the pathology site based on specimen viability, storage capacity and clinical need.

Material	Minimum Retention Time
<b>Surgical Pathology</b>	
Embedded blocks	20 years
Slides	20 years
<b>Cytology (gyne/non gyne)</b>	
Slides (negative-unsatisfactory)	5 years
Slides (positive, any abnormality $\geq$ ASCUS)	20 years
Fine-needle aspiration slides	20 years
Blocks	20 years
<b>Autopsy (hospital and coroner)</b>	
Embedded blocks	10 years
Slides	10 years
<b>Frozen Tissue Blocks</b>	
Muscle biopsies for enzyme testing	5 years
Skin biopsies for direct immunofluorescence testing	5 years
Renal biopsies	10 years
Heart biopsies	10 years

### Applies to:

- Embedded blocks
  - Paraffin/plastic embedded tissue blocks
- Slides:
  - glass slides generated from tissue blocks
  - glass slides generated from original specimen (frozen section, smears, touch preps, cytopins, thin prep, mounted filters)

### Does not apply to:

- Tissue section slides produced using procedures that generate an unstable end product e.g. fluorescent in-situ hybridization (FISH)

## Review History

Date	Reviewer	Changes / Edits
August 8, 2024	AP Discipline Committee	Added minimum retention times for Frozen Tissue Blocks
September 13, 2023	AP Discipline Committee	Cytology – added Non Gyne Cytology negative slides – changed from 7 years to 5 years (CAP-ACP recommendation) Fine Needle Aspirates – Added (CAP-ACP recommendation) Autopsy blocks and slides – changed from 20 years to 10 years (CAP-ACP recommendation)
February 9, 2023	AP Discipline Committee	Replace BCALP with PLMS Replace Provincial AP Advisory Group with Provincial AP Discipline Committee
September 10, 2019	AP Advisory Group	Approved

## References

1. Canadian Association of Pathologists – Association canadienne des pathologistes: [https://www.cap-acp.org/guide\\_retention-human-biologic-material.php](https://www.cap-acp.org/guide_retention-human-biologic-material.php)
2. Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories: <https://oaml.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/OAML-Guideline-for-the-Retention-of-Records-Materials-June-06.pdf>
3. College of American Pathologists: <https://documents-cloud.cap.org/pdf/laboratory-accreditation-manual-new.pdf>