

3.6. Clinical Laboratories

Clinical laboratories, especially those in health care facilities, receive clinical specimens with requests for a variety of diagnostic and clinical support services. Typically, the infectious nature of clinical material is unknown, and specimens are often submitted with a broad request for microbiological examination for multiple agents (e.g., sputa submitted for "routine," acid-fast, and fungal cultures). *It is the responsibility of the Laboratory Director to establish standard procedures in the laboratory that realistically address the issue of the infective hazard of clinical specimens.*

Except in extraordinary circumstances (e.g., suspected hemorrhagic fever), the initial processing of clinical specimens and serological identification of isolates can be done safely at BSL-2, the recommended level for work with bloodborne pathogens such as HBV and HIV. The containment elements described in BSL-2 are consistent with the OSHA standard, "*Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens.*" This requires the use of specific precautions with **all** clinical specimens of blood or other potentially infectious material (Universal or Standard Precautions). Additionally, other recommendations specific for clinical laboratories may be obtained from the Clinical Laboratory Standards Institute.