If you take your taonga/tissue home

Taonga/tissue returned after the laboratory examination is preserved in Formalin, a toxic chemical. It will be washed before, but for your safety, it is **IMPORTANT** to follow these guidelines:

Keep the taonga/tissue in the returned container.

If removed from the container:

- Always wear disposable gloves if touching and wash your hands with soap and water after removing your gloves
- Do not try to smell the taonga/tissue. It can cause irritation of the nose and throat.
- Avoid direct contact with your skin and eyes
- In the event of splashes to skin, wash immediately with soap and running tap water
- In the event of splashes to the eyes, rinse immediately with cold water for at least 15 minutes and see your doctor if eye irritation continues
- Formalin is poisonous. Do not store taonga/tissue in a fridge or freezer where food is kept or where children or animals may have access
- Contact the National Poisons Centre 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766 immediately if Formalin is ingested, taken into mouth, or any contact with the lips.

Burial of body parts and taonga/tissue

We strongly advise checking with your local council before disposing of any taonga/tissue (whether it be burial, cremation, at sea, or any other means) to ensure no breach of bylaws.

- Taonga/tissue should be buried at a depth of 1 metre or more, where it will remain safe from being accessed by animals or accidentally exposed
- Funeral directors can cremate body parts for a fee
- Local iwi/hapu consider it culturally inappropriate to scatter cremated remains into local waterways or maunga (volcanic cones).

Contact information

Bereavement Care Services

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
Counties Manukau

Ph: 09 276 0044 Ext 58501 or 021 421 537

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Taonga/tissue handling and return

Counties Manukau

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Taonga/tissue handling and return

We aim to maintain the mana and dignity of all taonga/tissue, from removal to testing and return or disposal.

This pamphlet is a part of the informed consent process – please read it carefully.

The word 'taonga' is used to describe any tissue or body part that you and/or your whaanau place value on. However, we acknowledge that not all tissue will be taonga to all patients.

Our staff will assist you with any concerns or questions.

What is considered taonga/tissue?

Any body parts removed from the body. Some examples include tissue biopsies, organs, limbs, pregnancy tissue or products of conception, including whenua (placenta).

It does not include medical equipment containing body waste or fluids, such as intravenous lines, drains, tubes, syringes, containers, swabs, blood, urine, or any other body fluid. Metalware, medical instruments and infectious tissue are also not included.

What happens to your taonga/tissue?

During a procedure or surgery, a sample of the tissue removed is sent to the laboratory for testing with your consent.

The tissue is processed into wax blocks and made into thin slices to be checked under a microscope. This process takes at least five weeks, and bone samples may take longer.

We will return the samples that have **not** been processed to you. The processed tissue is kept because sometimes your care team may need to undertake additional testing to provide care for you or your whaanau.

If you wish to have these slides returned, please contact our Bereavement Care Services.

The processing of the taonga/tissue in the laboratory can change its appearance. If this concerns you, please discuss it with your doctor before your procedure or surgery. They can communicate with the laboratory to clarify.

If you do not wish to have your taonga/tissue returned, or if it cannot be returned (for example, if it is infected tissue), it will be disposed of or cremated, depending on the tissue type.

Collection of your taonga/tissue

If testing of your taonga/tissue is not needed, you will receive it before going home, or it will be available for collection from Bereavement Care Services, located at Middlemore Hospital.

Once your taonga/tissue is ready for collection, Bereavement Care Services will contact you via letter (post or email) and text message.

Taonga/tissue related to pregnancy (baby or placenta) can be returned more quickly. Discuss with your midwife or nurse and ask them to contact the laboratory if needed.

If Bereavement Care has not heard from you, they will attempt to reach you through letters, text messages, and phone calls. If they are still unable to make contact, the taonga/tissue/body parts will be cremated, as your tissue can only be stored for three months.

Support

We understand this may be a difficult and sensitive topic for some patients and their whaanau/family. If you would like spiritual or cultural support (for example, Maaori or Pacific Health services), please let us know as soon as possible.