Patient Instructions for Sputum Collection

* Collect the specimen in the morning after you first wake.
  + A sample may be collected at any time for patients who have a deep cough that is readily productive.
* Gargle and rinse your mouth with plain water just prior to collecting.
* Take a very deep breath and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly breathe out. Take another deep breath and cough hard, deeply from within the chest until some sputum comes up into your mouth.
* Spit the sputum into the plastic cup provided by your provider or laboratory.
  + Do not spit saliva into the container - saliva and upper respiratory secretions are not sputum and are not acceptable specimens, which may lead to rejection of the sample.
  + One to three milliliters (approximately 1 teaspoon) of sputum is sufficient.
* Screw the cap back on the container, making sure it is threaded properly to prevent leakage.
* Label the specimen cup with your full first and last name, birth date, and date/time of collection.
  + \*Incorrectly or incompletely labeled specimens will not be tested.
* Place the labeled specimen container into the plastic zip-lock bag. Return the specimen to the nearest Aspirus laboratory as soon as possible.
  + The specimen may be refrigerated for not more than three hours before returning to the laboratory.
  + Prolonged delays will affect test results and may result in your sample needing to be recollected.
* Report to the registration desk upon arrival with the specimen. Reception will register you and assist in directing the sample to the lab.

\*If you have any questions regarding these instructions, you may call your local laboratory for clarification.