

Laboratory Services

Sputum Specimen Collection

Your doctor has ordered some tests that require a sputum specimen. It is important to follow instructions below on how to collect a sputum specimen. Any changes may result in inaccurate test results. If you have any questions, be sure to ask your care provider for assistance.

The ideal time to collect sputum is early morning because bronchial secretions collect during the night. Twenty-four-hour sputum collections are not acceptable for culture.

Read through all instructions before beginning.

COLLECTION and TRANSPORTATION INSTRUCTIONS

- **Collecting the Specimen**
- Rinse your mouth or brush your teeth with water, do not use mouthwash or toothpaste.
- A sterile container should be used for collecting the specimen and is usually provided for you; do not touch inside surfaces as you open the container.
- Sputum is a thick mucus that comes from the lungs, it is not the same as spit. Start your collection by standing or sitting upright while coughing, if possible.
- Breathe slowly and deeply before you begin. After you inhale (breathe in), cough deeply to bring up some phlegm. Spit the sputum (phlegm) directly into the open container. **DO NOT HOLD SPUTUM IN YOUR MOUTH**
- Do not spit saliva or nasal discharge (snot) into the container.
- Repeat coughing until enough sputum has been collected.
- 1 ml for standard sputum culture.
- 5-10 ml for TB culture and stain.
- Secure the top on the specimen container tightly.
- Wipe any sputum present on the outside of the container with a disinfectant wipe. Ensure that the container is tightly closed before wiping to prevent contaminating the specimen.
- Complete the information requested on the container label.
 - **Label must include Last Name, First Name, Date of Birth, and Date and Time of collection.**

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1/21/1959
8/1/2024 0700

Patient label must be complete and legible for the sample to be accepted by the laboratory.

Label must be attached to the container, NOT the lid.

- Place the labeled specimen in a biohazard bag.
- Immediately transport the specimen to the laboratory.
 - Samples not transported to the laboratory within 2 hours must be refrigerated and kept cold.