



Collection Procedure for Sputum Samples

For successful diagnosis of infection through testing of sputum samples, it is important that the patient understand the importance of collecting an adequate sample. Samples must be produced from a deep cough. If the sample is contaminated with cells from the mouth or saliva, it will be rejected and the patient will be required to recollect the sputum specimen.

Please follow these instructions to help insure that an adequate specimen is collected:

- ✓ Brush teeth, gargle, and rinse mouth with water. DO NOT use mouthwash.
- ✓ Collect the first morning specimen if possible, since it represents a pool of material that would have collected overnight.
- ✓ Cough deeply, or expectorate directly into a sterile screw-top container. Be careful not to touch the inside of the container or the inside of the lid.
- ✓ The volume of the specimen need not be large, but must be mucous-like material from a deep cough. The best specimen should be about 2 to 3 mLs or approximately 1/2 teaspoon.
- ✓ Saliva is unacceptable and will be rejected by the laboratory. The patient will be required to recollect the specimen if saliva is present.
- ✓ Keep the specimen refrigerated and transport to the laboratory as soon as possible, preferably within 30 minutes of collection. Avoid exposure to extreme temperatures.

NOTE: For Cystic Fibrosis specimens, a swab may be used to collect the specimen. This should be determined by the provider and would be collected by the physician office.

NOTE: For certain tests, the physician may require collection of more than one specimen, collected on different days. If this is required, each specimen should be delivered to the lab on the day it is collected.