

Sputum Collection Instructions

- Sputum is the mucous or phlegm coughed up from your lungs. It is not saliva or mucous from the back of the throat.
- Sputum specimens are best if coughed up first thing in the morning, *after* you have been sleeping all night.
- Before the collection, rinse your mouth thoroughly with water and gargle with water (*not* mouthwash) to reduce specimen contamination by bacteria or food particles.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or brush your teeth before collecting the sputum.

Instructions

1. To reduce the likelihood of spreading germs to other people when you cough, collect the specimen outdoors or near an open window.
2. Rinse mouth with water several times and gargle with water. If you wear dentures, remove the dentures first.
3. Take deep breaths through your mouth. Cough deeply several times to bring up the fluid from your lungs. The material needed should come from deep in the lungs, do not spit saliva or postnasal discharge into the specimen cup. This cannot be used for testing and the sample will be rejected.
4. Open the sterile specimen cup provided by the laboratory and hold it close to your mouth. Expel the specimen into the sterile cup without getting any on the outside of the container.
5. Secure the lid tightly to prevent leakage during transport.
6. Label the container with your full legal name, date of birth, collection date and time.
7. Return the specimen to a Sanford Patient Service Center or Sanford laboratory as soon as possible. If you are unable to deliver the sample immediately, the specimen can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.

If your physician has ordered the test to be done on 3 separate sputum samples, follow the instructions above for three consecutive mornings. Use three separate specimen cups and label them as #1, #2, and #3 and return to a Sanford Patient Service Center or Sanford laboratory as soon as possible.

KEEP SPECIMENS REFRIGERATED UNTIL DELIVERED TO THE LABORATORY