

Collection of Sputum for Culture and Sensitivity

Collecting a sputum sample

1. It is very important that the sputum is the material coughed up from the lungs, and not saliva or 'spit' from the mouth, or mucous from the back of the throat.
2. The best quality sample is usually obtained early in the morning upon waking, but samples collected at other times of the day are also acceptable.
 - food should not be ingested for 1 to 2 hours prior to collection
 - mouth should be rinsed out with water or saline prior to collection
 - patient should breathe and cough deeply
3. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly.
4. Remove the lid on the STERILE container and set it aside.
5. After a deep cough, collect sputum into the container (must be thick sample and not thin saliva). Repeat coughing until 5-10 mL (1-2 teaspoons) of sputum is collected.
6. Replace the lid and tighten firmly.
7. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after collection.
8. Label the container with your full legal name (first and last), date of birth, and CareCard number. Write the date and time of collection on the label.
9. For sanitary reasons, the container must be enclosed in a plastic bag. Refrigerate the sputum sample and deliver to the Laboratory as soon as possible.

The sample must be submitted in the sterile container provided by the laboratory. No other sample container is acceptable.

If the sample is not adequate, a repeat collection will be requested.

Refrigerate the sputum sample and deliver to the Laboratory as soon as possible.

The sample must arrive at the Laboratory within 24 hours of collection (during normal hours of operation).

Separate samples in separate containers are required for each request of routine culture, AFB (TB) or Cytology.

For TB, you will be asked to collect 3 samples. Samples may be collected on the same day, at least one hour apart. Ideally, one specimen will be collected in the morning, prior to eating or drinking. Sputum may also be collected daily, for 3 days in a row (ideally in the morning). Use a new container each time and collect a minimum of 5 mL (1 teaspoon) in each container.

If you have any questions regarding your sample collection please contact your provider or nurse (for inpatients) or your local laboratory (outpatients).

Outpatients must present their current health insurance (CareCard) and requisition to the laboratory.

Call 8-1-1 Healthlink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca	Nurse	24 hours a day	Daily	Call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse, ask a dietitian about nutrition, or a pharmacist about your medication.
	Dietitian	9 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Mon – Fri	
	Pharmacist	5 p.m. – 9 a.m.	Daily	
	Hearing Impaired	Call 7-1-1		