

Hunterdon Medical Center Laboratory

Patient Collection Instructions: Sputum Collection

Follow carefully the instructions below. This will greatly reduce the chance of inappropriate specimens and the need for recollection.

1. The specimen should be collected early in the morning.
2. The specimen must be collected in sterile, screw-cap sputum collection cup.
3. The specimen must be collected at home. For safety, the specimen will not be collected in the laboratory area.
4. Rinse your mouth with water. If you have dentures, remove the dentures first.
5. A deep cough, first thing in the morning is needed to produce the sputum sample (no post nasal drip, no spit).
6. Collect the specimen directly into the sterile collection cup provided.
7. Carefully replace the cap and tighten. Check to ensure that the cap is closed and secure.
8. Label the container with:
 - **Patient's full name** ****UNLABELED SPECIMENS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED****
 - **Date of birth**
 - **Date and Time of collection**
9. Refrigerate the specimen if a delay of more than 1 to 2 hours for drop off is anticipated.
10. Place labeled specimens in a sealed specimen bag and return to the laboratory along with the order for the test(s) to be performed.
11. *Deliver the sample within **24 hours of collection if refrigerated** and within **2 hours if held at room temperature.**

Notes:

- A physician order needs to accompany the specimen that is delivered to the Laboratory.
- Minimum sample amounts for:
 1. Bacteria culture at least 1 ml
 2. Fungi culture 3-5 ml
 3. AFB culture 5-10 ml (If the physician orders multiple tests for AFB (x3), you may be required to collect a new specimen for 2 or 3 consecutive days. Multiple specimens must be 24 hours apart. Each specimen must be labeled with date and time of collection.*

Note: *Specimens collected for AFB culture on multiple days may be held in the refrigerator and delivered to the laboratory on Day #3.