

## **Sputum Collection Instructions**

### **Amount to Collect**

5ml (about 1 teaspoon) *is the necessary amount for most tests on sputum.* However, multiple tests are often ordered so more specimen may be necessary. Also, some testing is best done on serial specimens, therefore, you may be asked to collect for 3 days in a row.

### **Collection Container**

We will give you a sterile specimen container for each sputum collection along with a biohazard marked baggie. Because the container is sterile, open it only when putting in specimen. After the specimen is obtained *replace the lid tightly* on the cup, place the cup in the baggie provided and *refrigerate immediately*. Leave the specimen in the refrigerator until you are ready to bring it to the lab. The sooner you can bring the specimen to the lab, the better.

### **How to Collect**

The best time to collect a specimen is in the morning, just after rising. If, however, you feel that you can produce a good specimen here at the hospital, we will be happy to assist you. If you choose to collect at home, *gargle and rinse* your mouth with water before you collect the specimen. This step helps reduce the normal bacteria and cells that may interfere with your test results.

Inhale repeatedly to full lung capacity and exhale the air with an explosive cough. This should produce mucus from the lungs that can be expectorated into the container. "Spit" from the mouth is not adequate specimen.

### **After the Specimen is Collected**

Transport the specimen to the lab the same day as it was collected. Within two hours of collection is the preferred time frame for optimal specimen processing.