



SPUTUM COLLECTION GUIDELINES FOR MICROBIOLOGIC TESTING

Materials supplied

Respiratory culture collection device (Sterile container)

Biohazard transport bags

Collection instructions:

1. It is best to collect sputum early in the morning; because secretions have accumulated overnight, however samples taken at other times of the day are acceptable.
2. Wash and dry hands thoroughly.
3. Remove dentures if present.
4. Rinse mouth and gargle with **sterile water** prior to collection. Do NOT use tap water.
5. Open the lid of the sample container.
6. Take several deep breaths and exhale.
7. Cough deeply from the diaphragm and expectorate sputum in a sterile container.
8. Ensure specimen in thick mucus - not saliva or post-nasal discharge
9. Screw cap on tightly being careful not to touch the inside of the container or lid.
10. Place specimen inside the biohazard transport bag. Put the completed requisition in the side pouch of the bag.
11. Deliver to the microbiology laboratory at room temperature within 2 hours; or store specimen in the fridge (do not freeze) and deliver within 24 hours of collection.

NOTE: For AFB sputum cultures, **three** specimens at 8–24-hour intervals (24 hours when possible) with at least one first-morning specimen must be collected.