

Laboratory Services

Sputum Specimen Collection

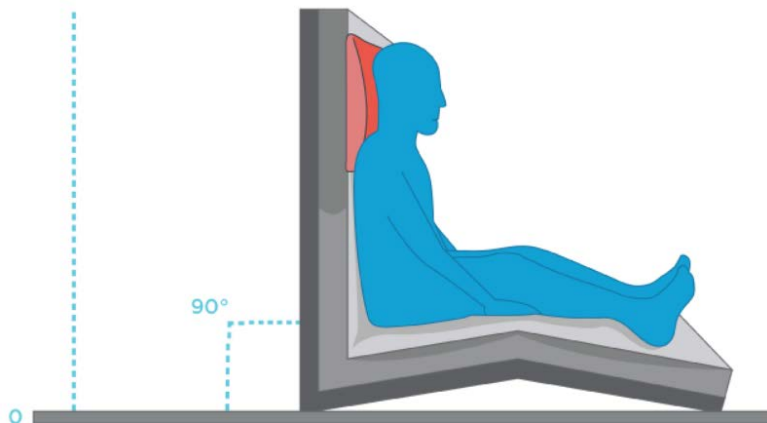
Your doctor has ordered some tests that require a sputum specimen. It is important to follow instructions below on how to collect a sputum specimen. Any changes may result in inaccurate test results. If you have any questions, be sure to ask your care provider for assistance.

The ideal time to collect sputum is early morning because bronchial secretions collect during the night. Twenty-four-hour sputum collections are not acceptable for culture.

Read through all instructions before beginning.

COLLECTION and TRANSPORTATION INSTRUCTIONS

- **Collecting the Specimen**
- Rinse your mouth or brush your teeth with water. Do not use mouthwash or toothpaste because they may decrease the viability of the microorganisms and alter the culture results.
- A sterile container should be used for collecting the specimen and is usually provided for you; do not touch inside surfaces as you open the container.
- The best sputum specimen is one produced by deep coughing; stand or sit upright (see diagram below) while coughing.



- Take several slow deep breaths and then cough after a full inhalation. If you have an incision or localized area of discomfort, place your hands or a pillow firmly over the affected area and get someone to hold the collection container for you, while you collect the specimen.
- As soon as possible expectorate sputum directly into the specimen container. Do not hold sputum in the mouth.
- Do not expectorate saliva or post nasal discharge into the container.
- Repeat coughing until a sufficient quantity, a minimum of 5 to 10 ml of sputum, is collected. Approximately 12 to 23 Tablespoons
- Secure the top on the specimen container tightly.
- Wipe any sputum present on the outside of the container with a disinfectant wipe. Ensure that the container is tightly closed before wiping to prevent contaminating the specimen.



- Prepare the specimen for transport.
- Place the labeled specimen in a biohazard bag.
- Immediately transport the specimen to the laboratory.

Label the specimen with patient's full name, date of birth, date/time of collection, and doctor that ordered the sample.
