

Collection, Storage and Transport of Sputum Specimens

Patient Collection Instructions



1. Collect sputum specimen in a sterile container, #6004913 (LHMC Lab).
2. Confirm the collection container is labeled correctly with:
 - a. Patient first and last legal name
 - b. Date of birth
 - c. Date and time of collection
 - d. Type of specimen
3. Collection of early morning specimens (before the morning meal) is preferred due to overnight accumulation of secretions. However, specimens may be collected at any time from patients who have a deep cough that is readily productive.
4. Rinse mouth and gargle thoroughly with bottled water to remove excess biota. Remove dentures prior to rinsing if applicable. Do not use mouthwash or brush teeth with toothpaste immediately before collection.
5. The ideal sputum specimen is produced by repeated deep inhalation and exhalation of breath followed by a cough as deep within the chest cavity as possible. Sputum should consist of thick, mucoid, white-yellow, sometimes blood tinged, material from the lower airways and lungs. **Saliva is not acceptable.**
6. Breathe deep a number of times and then cough from deep down within the lungs.
7. Collect the sputum in the sterile container provided and avoid touching the inside or edge of the specimen container or lid with fingers.
8. Upper respiratory and nasal secretions are **NOT** sputum and are unacceptable.
9. A minimum of 5 mLs (approximately 1 tablespoon) of sample is required.
10. Replace the lid/cap after collection and close tightly to avoid leakage. Place in a sealed plastic bag.
11. If the physician orders multiple specimens, collect one specimen per day and deliver to the laboratory within 24 hours.
12. Deliver the specimen and lab requisition to the laboratory as soon as possible. If transport is delayed by more than 30 minutes, refrigerate the specimen for up to 24 hours.

Specimens can be dropped off at the following locations:

- 7 AM – 4:45 pm, Monday through Friday at the Outpatient Laboratory Services Draw Site, 210 Sunnyview Ln, Suite 106 – Medical Arts Building.
- After hours and weekends please deliver specimen to the Main Laboratory on the 1st Floor in the Hospital. The Staff at the Volunteer Desk will assist you with directions.

If you have any questions regarding the collection requirements or need additional collection materials please contact the **LHMC Laboratory at 406-752-1737**