

How to Collect a Sputum Sample for Culture and Sensitivity

Instructions for Patients

Your doctor has asked that you collect a sample of your sputum. We will test this sample for bacteria. The results will help your doctor determine the cause of your lower respiratory tract infection.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Read ALL the instructions carefully.

- If you provide a poor quality sample, you may have to repeat the collection.

To get the BEST QUALITY SPUTUM SAMPLE:

- Take the sample early in the morning.
- To get sputum from your lungs, breathe in and cough deeply.
- If you cannot cough up sputum, try breathing in steam from a hot shower or a pan of boiling water just before you collect the sputum. The hot steam may loosen the secretions in your lungs.

BEFORE taking a sample:

- Do not eat or drink anything for 1 to 2 hours before the collection.
- Remove dentures, if applicable.

Sputum is the mucous or phlegm that you cough up **from the lungs**. It is thick and sticky.

Sputum is **not saliva** (spit). Saliva comes from the mouth or back of the throat and is thin and watery.

How do I collect a sputum sample?


STEP 1. Gather your supplies in the bathroom, within easy reach.

- The **sterile container** that we gave you for sputum collection. We will not accept the sample in any other container.
- If the container does not have a label with your name on it, clearly print your full legal name (first and last), and your date of birth. Then print the date and time of the collection.

STEP 2. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry thoroughly.

STEP 3. Remove the lid of the container and set it aside.

To keep it sterile, do not touch the inside of the lid or container.

Continued on back of page.
Please turn over. 

How do I collect a sputum sample? (continued)

STEP 4. Collect your sputum sample.

- A. Rinse your mouth with **water** to prevent any bacteria or food particles in your mouth from mixing with the sputum sample. **Do not** rinse with mouthwash.
- B. Cough deeply to loosen any thick sputum.
- C. Release the sputum directly into the sterile container. Make sure you do not include saliva.
- D. Replace the lid and tighten firmly to prevent leaking.
- E. For sanitary reasons, place the container in a sealed plastic bag.
- F. Put your sample in the fridge right away.

STEP 5. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry thoroughly.

STEP 6. Return the sample.

Within 24 hours of collecting your sample, return it to the **HRH Ambulatory Clinic Laboratory**.

The Clinic is located on level 1 of the hospital, across from the Central Elevators. You can drop off your sample Monday to Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

NOTE - If your doctor has requested:

- Different sputum tests (such as routine culture, AFB (TB or tuberculosis), or cytology), you will need to give a separate sample for each test.
- A TB (tuberculosis) sputum test, we will give you 3 labeled, sterile containers. You may need to collect 3 separate samples, for 3 mornings in a row.
- A sputum test after your nebulizer treatments, write this down on the container.



When will I receive my results?

A report will be sent back to your doctor. For most sputum tests, this usually takes about 48 hours. When your report is ready, you can view it on myHumberHealth (<https://myhumberhealth.ca>). Please make sure we have your correct email address at registration.

Exception: The TB sputum tests are sent to Public Health, so results will take longer to receive. The results of this test will also not be available from my HumberHealth.