



BC Centre for Disease Control  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

# Sputum Collection Instructions

- Sputum is the mucous or phlegm coughed up *from your lungs*. It is not saliva or mucous from the back of the throat.
- Sputum specimens are best if coughed up first thing in the morning, *after* you have been sleeping at night. You will normally be asked to produce one sputum sample each morning for three mornings in a row. You will have 3 jars/bags, 1 for each day.
- Before you do the test, gargle with water (*not* mouthwash) to rinse out your mouth. Do not eat, drink, smoke or brush your teeth before collecting the sputum.
- About a tablespoon of sputum is the amount that is needed.
- Specimens should be kept in the refrigerator (*not* freezer) until they are returned to the clinic/office.

*Go away from other people – either outside or beside an open window – before collecting the specimen. This helps protect other people from germs when you cough. Take the plastic bottle with you. The collection bottle is very clean. Do not open it until you are ready to use it!*

## Procedure:

- 1 Gargle with water to rinse out your mouth.
- 2 Take deep breaths through your mouth. Try and cough up mucous from deep in your chest. You may need to take several deep breaths and do lots of coughing.
- 3 Open the jar and hold it close to your mouth. Spit the mucous into the jar, without getting any on the outside of the jar.
4. Screw the lid on tightly, so it does not leak.
5. Put the used jar into the bag it came in and seal the bag closed.
6. Put the specimen into the refrigerator until you can return the specimens to the clinic or office. The specimen must be returned within 3 days of collection.



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