

Instructions for Collecting Sputum for Tuberculosis (TB)

Last updated: 03 February 2015

You have been asked to produce three early morning sputum (phlegm) samples. To help you collect them, we have given you three specimen jars and a plastic bag. The jars are labelled with your name and numbered "1", "2", and "3", for three consecutive days. Please be careful not to touch the inside of the jar at any time.

Note: It is essential you supply sputum / phlegm from the lungs NOT saliva (fluid from the mouth) for this test.

If you have a problem producing sputum turn on the water taps in the bathroom until the room is filled with steam. (Please take care to avoid hot water overflow and scalding). Close the door and sit in the steamy room for five to ten minutes, then try again. Alternatively, you could try a warm shower or bath before trying to cough up the sputum. Breathing deeply while pressing firmly on the sides of your chest, followed by a deep cough can also help to bring up sputum.

Instructions:

1. When you wake up in the morning and before you have anything to eat or drink or clean your teeth, please supply a specimen of sputum into the jar marked "1".
(Check that you haven't coughed up only saliva).
2. Write the date and time of collection on the specimen jar marked "1".
3. PLEASE SCREW THE LID TIGHTLY ON THE JAR TO AVOID LEAKAGE
4. Put the jar in the plastic bag provided.
5. Put the plastic bag with the specimen jar, into the fridge, not in the freezer.
6. Repeat steps 1 - 5 on the next 2 consecutive mornings using the jars (marked "2" and "3").
7. Return specimens to the Chest / TB Clinic or Pathology Department (whichever you were advised), as soon as possible, after the last sample has been collected. Keep specimens cool and out of sunlight until delivered.

Note: It may take up to 3 working days to get preliminary results, and 6 - 8 weeks to obtain the final culture results. The Clinic nurses will notify you of any abnormalities.

If you have any questions about the collection of these specimens, please contact the Clinic.