

Instructions for Sputum Collection

Purpose

A specimen of phlegm from the lungs is collected to determine if a bacterial, fungal or viral infection is present.

Preparation

First morning specimens are preferred. Use a sterile cup for collection. Rinse the mouth with saline or water (not mouthwash) to reduce contamination.

Collecting the Sample

Cough up chest phlegm into the cup. **Do not send saliva (spit) or post nasal drainage.** If you have a dry cough, induce a deep chest cough:

Breathe in and out with deep, hard breaths three to five times. Inhale deeply and then exhale completely. When you think you have blown out all the air, blow out again (without inhaling any more air). Cough up chest phlegm into the cup.

Returning the Sample

Write your name, date of birth, date and time the specimen was collected on the container. Refrigerate the cup if it will be longer than one hour before you deliver the specimen to the McFarland Lab. Deliver within 24 hours of collection.