

## SPUTUM COLLECTION PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

**IMPORTANT: Please read all directions first and follow them carefully for accurate test results.**

Your provider has ordered a test that requires a sputum specimen collection. It is very important that an adequate sputum specimen is collected for this procedure.

- **Sputum is material from deep down in the chest which is obtained by deep coughing.**
- Saliva is the watery fluid in the mouth and is not suitable for culture.
- Post-nasal discharge is the thick material which drains down from the nose and sinuses at the back of the throat, especially at night. This material should be cleared from the throat and discarded before collecting the sputum specimen.

Sterile specimen containers are needed for collection. Please obtain them from the laboratory if not given to you by your provider.

### **COLLECTION PROCEDURE:**

1. Drink plenty of fluids the night before the collection
2. Collect sputum immediately after waking and before eating and drinking. Rinse mouth with water and remove dentures, if any. Do not brush teeth or use mouthwash. Sit upright.
3. Breathe in and out deeply to the full capacity of your lungs 2-4 times.
4. Give a series of low, deep coughs. This should produce sputum from the lungs. Deposit the material into the sterile container. The specimen **MUST BE FROM THE LUNGS**. "Spit" from the mouth is inadequate and will provide incorrect results to your physician. One to two teaspoonfuls of sputum is required for most tests.
5. Secure the lid tightly to prevent leakage. Label the container with your name, date of birth and date and time of collection of the sputum specimen.
6. For acid fast culture, three (3) specimens are usually collected over three (3) consecutive days. The specimens for the first and second days may be refrigerated until the third specimen is collected, so that you can take all three specimens to the laboratory at the same time.
7. Return the specimen container(s) and any slips or requisitions to the laboratory on the same morning the last specimen was collected.
8. Be sure your container is labeled with your name, date of birth, sample date and time **BEFORE** you leave the laboratory.