

Three-Day Sputum Sample

What is a sputum sample?

Sputum is the mucus or sputum that you cough up from your lungs. Your doctor has asked for a sputum sample on three different days to help find out what may be causing your lung symptoms. It is best if you can do these three days in a row.

These samples will be done at home. The nurse will provide you with sample cups and forms to return with the samples.

Your doctor will discuss your test results with you. It may take a few days for the results.

How do I prepare for these tests?

Drink plenty of fluids the three nights before each test. This may help to produce better samples.

How do I produce a sputum sample?

1. The best sputum samples are done first thing in the morning before eating. You may take a warm shower first to help loosen up the sputum in your lungs.
2. Each morning you will need a fresh sputum sample cup and a cup of water.
3. Rinse your mouth well with water. Swish and spit. You may brush your teeth before this rinse.
4. Take a very deep breath and cough hard and deeply until you can feel sputum come up into the back of your throat. Clear your throat and cough the sputum into the cup. **Do not** touch the inside of the cup with your hands so other germs do not enter the sample.

5. If you do not get a sample after the first few coughs, wait a few minutes and keep trying with strong, deep coughing. A good sample will look thicker and cloudier than your saliva.
6. Secure the lid on to the sample cup.
7. Label the cup with the date and time of your sample.
8. Place the sample into the fridge until you mail the sample or leave for the clinic.
9. Please transport or mail all samples back to the lab within 4 days of the first sample.

What do I write on the forms?

Please write the date and time that you gave the samples on the forms. Place the form around the cups with a rubber band.

How do I transport the sample?

The nurse will instruct you to either mail or bring the three samples back to the clinic. If you have been asked to mail the samples, the clinic will provide you with mailing supplies.

If you have been asked to bring in the samples, place in a cooler if you live more than 1 hour away.

When to Call

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the UWHC clinic that ordered the sputum tests for you.

Who to Call

The number listed can transfer you to your clinic, Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm.
(608) 263-6400, or 1-800-323-8942.