

Single 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 to help find out what may be causing your lung symptoms. This is a test that you will do at home. The nurse will provide you with a sample cup and forms to return with the sample.

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

How do I prepare for this test?

Drink plenty of fluids the night before the test. This may help to produce a better sample.

How do I produce a sputum sample?

1. The best sputum sample is 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. You will need the 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. You may have to spit it into the cup once the sputum has reached the front of your mouth. **Do not** touch the inside of the cup with your hands so that 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. Place the sample into the fridge until you mail the sample or take to the clinic.
8. Please transport or mail all samples back to the lab within 4 calendar days of giving the first sample.

What do I write on the forms and sample cup?

Please write the date and time that you gave the sample on both the form and the cup. Place the form around the cup with a rubber band.

How do I transport the sample?

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

If you have been asked to bring in the sample, please transport it in a cooler if you live more than 1 hour away.

When to Call

If you have any questions or concerns, please call 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.