



Sputum Culture

Dear Patient,

Your doctor has ordered a laboratory test that will require you to collect a sputum sample in a sterile specimen cup, and return it to the laboratory. Your doctor may have ordered either a single collection or multiple collections. Please follow the instructions on this sheet to ensure accurate results.

HOW TO COLLECT A SAMPLE

- 1. Preparation.** Early morning specimens are the most concentrated, and therefore best suited for analysis. After waking, brush your teeth then rinse your mouth thoroughly with warm water. This is to reduce contamination of the sputum sample with oral flora. Do not use mouthwash or fluoride rinses as they may interfere with the culture.
- 2. Open the specimen cup and collect the sputum sample directly into the open cup.** Unscrew the cover on the specimen cup and place the cover, face up, on a flat surface. Do not touch inside the cover or the inside of the open specimen cup. Produce a deep cough sputum specimen directly into the specimen cup. Do not contaminate the outer surfaces of the specimen cup with sputum.
- 3. Re-cap the specimen cup securely.** After you have collected the sputum sample in the specimen cup, replace the cap. Seal the cap securely to prevent leaking.
- 4. Label the specimen cup.** Be sure to label the cup with your full name, as well as the date and time you collected the sputum sample.
- 5. Deliver the specimen cup to the laboratory.** Bring the labeled cup to the laboratory as soon after collection as possible-do not delay if you are collecting more than one specimen. You may bring the sample to the laboratory where you received the specimen cup, or to any Clinical Laboratories of Hawaii site near you. Please be sure to bring the test requisition provided by your doctor along with the sample. If multiple samples are requested, bring each sample to the laboratory as soon after collection as possible.

HELPFUL HINTS AND PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid excessive contamination with saliva. Obvious saliva should not be submitted. If the specimen submitted is not adequate, you may be asked to re-collect the sample.
- If delivery of the specimen cannot take place within one hour of collection, keep the sample refrigerated.
- If your doctor has requested multiple samples, they should be collected on different days, rather than several samples from a single day.
- Specimens must be collected directly into the specimen cup. Samples submitted in tissue paper will be rejected.