

Patient Instructions for the Collection and Transport of Sputum Specimens

Sputum specimens must be properly collected and transported in order for the test results to be valid. Please follow the directions below.

NOTE: Sputum is a mucus material produced in respiratory diseases. It is produced from a deep cough from the respiratory tract. Saliva is not the same thing as sputum. Saliva will not be cultured by the lab.

1. Obtain sputum collection cup from physician.
2. A single sample may be used for any combination of the following tests:
 - Culture and sensitivity
 - Gram stain
 - Fungus culture
 - Mycobacteriology (AFB or TB) culture
3. Collection: The optimal time of day for collection is early morning. Have patient brush teeth and gargle with water immediately before obtaining sputum specimen to reduce the number of contaminating oropharyngeal bacteria. Avoid mouthwashes/gargles containing antibacterial substances.
 - a. Flip up white hinged lid.
 - b. Spit mucous material from a deep cough into container. Do not spit saliva into container or scrape tongue against rim of the container.
 - c. Firmly snap hinged lid back into place.
 - d. Continue to collect sputum until sufficient specimen is obtained. At least 5 ml specimen should be collected (gradations are engraved on side of tube).
 - e. If specimen will be delayed greater than two hours in delivery to the lab, it should be refrigerated.
 - f. Return specimen to lab location for testing.

The Outpatient Laboratory at Central DuPage Hospital is open during the following days/hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday	6:30 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday, Thursday	6:30 am – 6:30 pm
Saturday	8:00 am – 1:00 pm
Sunday	9:00 am – 12:00 pm

The Convenient Care Laboratories are open during the following days/hours:

Monday – Friday	7:30 am – 8:30 pm
Saturday – Sunday	8:00 am – 6:00 pm
Holidays	7:30 am – 4:00 pm*

* Open locations may vary; please call for holiday hours.

The patient's name, date of birth, date and time of collection should be noted on the specimen container.