

Collecting Sputum for Tuberculosis Testing

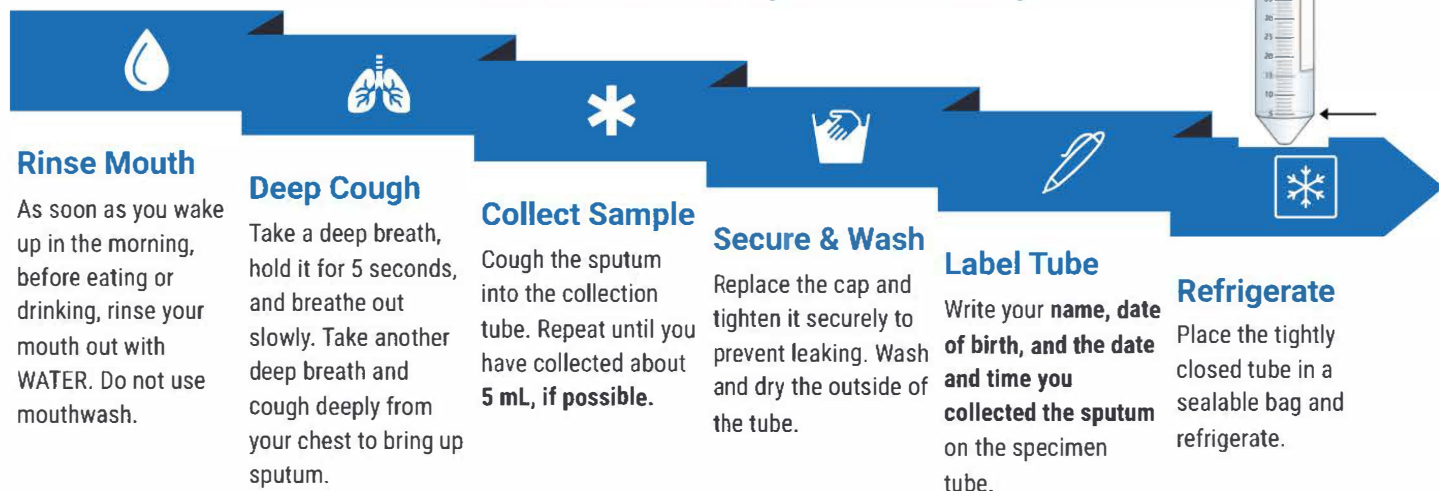
Why Do I Need a Sputum Specimen?

Your clinician has asked you to collect a sputum specimen for tuberculosis (TB) testing. Your sputum specimen can help determine whether TB germs are present or, if you are being treated for TB, help monitor your treatment. For an accurate result, it is important to collect sputum, not saliva. Sputum is the thick mucus that comes up when you cough deeply from your chest. Saliva is the thin, watery fluid (spit) in your mouth.



Your clinician will give you a special sputum collection tube. Do not open it until you are ready to collect your sample. The white powder (sodium carbonate) inside the tube is supposed to be there—do not remove or discard it.

How to Collect a Sputum Sample



NOTE: Be sure to collect sputum, not saliva. If you have trouble coughing up sputum, try breathing in steam from a warm shower first.

Next Steps



If you need to collect 3 sputum specimens, collect one each morning on 3 different days. Do not collect more than one specimen per day.



Deliver your specimens to your clinician's office or mail them to the laboratory as soon as possible.



Specimens must be received within 10 days of the collection date.

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<https://health.alaska.gov/en/education/laboratory-test-directory/lab-test-search-results-t/tuberculosis/>

Alaska Tuberculosis Program

For more information about TB call the
Section of Epidemiology at (907) 269-8000

<https://health.alaska.gov/en/education/tuberculosis/>