UF Health
PATHOLOGY LABORATORIES

UF Health Pathology Laboratories
4800 SW 35th Drive
Gainesville, FL 32608
Phone: 352.265.9900
Fax: 877.640.6465
pathlabs.ufl.edu

NTM Laboratory

Instructions for Collection of Sputum Specimens

Sputum is mucus or phlegm coughed up from your lungs (*not spit, saliva or nose discharge*).

- Drink plenty of water the night before collection.
- The best time of day to collect sputum is when you first wake.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke before coughing up sputum from the lungs.
- Rinse (do not swallow) your mouth with water before collection to get rid of food particles, mouthwash or oral drugs that might contaminate the specimen.
- Breathing deeply over a steam vessel (i.e. pan of boiling water) may help raise sputum.
- Take several deep breaths.
- Cough hard from deep inside the chest three times to bring sputum up from your lungs.
- Spit the sputum into the container carefully. Try not to touch the rim of the container.
- Repeat until you have 1 – 2 tablespoons of sputum in the container.
- Replace the cap tightly on the container.
- Wash and dry the outside of the container.

Write the date/time of collection, your name and date of birth on the container.

Instructions for Shipping Sputum Specimens

- Make sure that your name and date of birth are written on the container.
- Place the primary specimen container in the specimen bag that has the biohazard symbol imprint.
- Expel or push excess air from the plastic baggie and then seal it.
- Place the specimen bag inside the box and close it.
- Expel or push excess air from the envelope and then seal the envelope securely.
- Immediately ship via U.S. Post Office. If you cannot mail it immediately, store at room temperature or in the refrigerator (2-8˚ C) for no longer than 24 hours.

Questions? Call 352.265.9900 or toll-free 888.375.5227.