



Banner Health  
**McKee**  
Medical Center

## **PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXPECTORATED SPUTUM**

Your physician has ordered a test that requires testing of your sputum. Sputum is the mucus that you cough out of your lungs.

The best time to get the specimen is the first thing in the morning. During the night, when you don't breathe deep or walk around, the mucus in your lungs will not be cleared. When you wake up, yawn, and begin to move around, the mucus also moves and causes you to cough a larger amount out of your lungs.

A specimen cup will be provided for collection. If you would like to try to get a specimen now, the tech will take you to an area for privacy. If not, you can take the specimen cup home to collect the specimen. Collect the specimen as follows:

1. When you are ready to collect the specimen, open the cup and cough the mucus into it. It is very important not to open the cup before this time so other bacteria will not get into the cup.
2. Close the cup as soon as you finish expectorating. If you need more, reopen when you are ready to produce more specimen. Avoid spitting as saliva is not a good specimen. Do not space collections more than ½ hour apart.
3. The best specimen is one from DEEP in the lungs. If you have been coughing up mucus with color to it, that's what you should try to collect. (YES, THE YUCKIER THE BETTER!!)
4. After you have at least 1 teaspoonful of specimen, make sure the lid is on tight.
5. Label the container with your first and last name, date of birth or social security number. Also write the date and time of collection. The specimen should be received into the lab within two hours of collection.
6. Place the container into the plastic biohazard bag.
7. After the collection is completed bring the container to the Laboratory at the main Hospital as soon as possible. Bring a copy of the physician's orders with the specimen.
8. Please call the laboratory at 970-635-4151 with any additional questions.
9. If your physician has ordered more than one type of culture, you may be asked to bring multiple samples spaced over two or more morning collections.

**Note:**

If you are unable to produce any specimen, please call and inform your physician. The physician may ask you to come in so a respiratory therapist can assist you in getting a specimen.