Sputum Collection Guidelines

Why is a Sputum Test Necessary?

- Your doctor needs you to collect a sputum sample to test for tuberculosis (TB) in your lungs. Checking your sputum is the best way to find out if you have TB disease or to see if your treatment is working.
- To collect an acceptable sample you need to cough up sputum from deep inside of your lungs as soon as you wake up in the morning. The lab needs at least 5 mL of sputum.

How to Collect a Sputum Sample

1. The TB sputum tube must not be opened until you are ready to use it. DO NOT REMOVE preservative (white powder) from the tube.
2. As soon as you wake up in the morning, before you eat or drink, rinse your mouth with WATER.
3. Take a very deep breath and hold air for 5 seconds. Slowly breathe out. Take another deep breath and cough hard until some sputum comes up into your mouth.
4. Spit the sputum into the TB tube.
5. Keep collecting until the sputum reaches the 5 mL line on the TB tube.
6. Screw the orange cap on the tube tightly so it doesn't leak.
7. Wash and dry the outside of the TB tube.
8. Write your NAME, BIRTH DATE, and the DATE/TIME you collected the sputum on the tube and lab form.
9. Put the tube into the bag provided.
10. Deliver sample (s) to your Community Health Aide, doctor(s) office, or PHN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. (*Samples must be received at the Anchorage laboratory for testing within 10 days of collection.)*
11. If you need to collect three TB samples, collect them in the morning on three different days, unless you are told otherwise. Keep in a cool place until all are collected. Do not freeze.

Alaska State Public Health Laboratory: 5455 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., Anchorage, AK 99507 Phone: (907) 334-2100 Fax: (907) 334-2161

Alaska Tuberculosis Program: For more information about TB call the Section of Epidemiology at (907) 269-8000 or visit their website at: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/tb.aspx.