

# Sputum Collection for Tuberculosis (TB)

## What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by the TB bacteria (germ). TB usually affects the lungs but it can affect any part of the body.

TB is spread through the air from person to person when someone with TB in the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, laughs or speaks.

TB cannot be spread by touching surfaces, shaking hands or sharing objects.

## What is sputum?

Sputum is mucus that is coughed up from the lungs. It is not the same as saliva (spit) that comes from the mouth or back of the throat.

## Why is sputum tested?

Testing sputum is the best way to find out if you have TB bacteria in your lungs. It also helps the TB doctor decide which medication to use if you have TB.

Sputum may also be tested after people have been taking TB medications for a while. This helps tell if the medications are working.

## When do I collect sputum?

You need to collect 3 sputum samples. At least one sample must be collected as soon as you wake up in the morning (before you eat or drink). There must be at least 8 hours between each sample.

For example, if you collect your first sample in the evening then the second sample should be collected when you wake up the next morning. The third sample should then be collected either that evening or early the next morning.

## Important tips:

- Do not open the container until you are ready to use it.
- Use a different container for each sputum sample.
- Try to stay away from other people when you are coughing up sputum. Go outside or open a window if possible.

**For more information, contact  
TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan**

1-866-780-6482 or

Saskatoon Main Office (306) 655-1740

Prince Albert Office (306) 765-4260

Regina Office (306) 766-4311



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## How to collect a sputum sample

1. Rinse your mouth with water. Swish the water around, gargle then spit water into the sink. Do not use mouthwash.

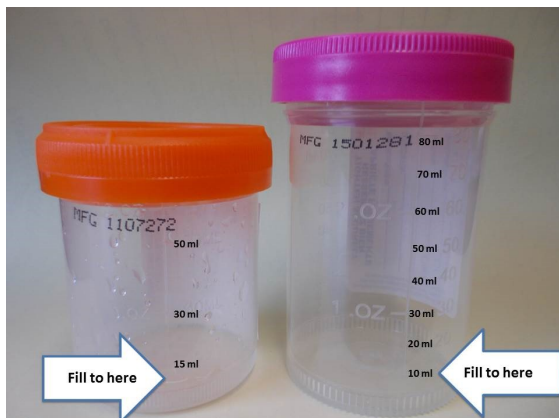
Dentures should be removed before rinsing your mouth. If you are giving a morning sputum sample, provide the sample before you eat, drink or smoke.

2. Take a deep breath in and slowly breathe out. Take another deep breath in and then cough hard to bring sputum up from your lungs.



*TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan. Coughing to bring up sputum. 2016.*

3. Spit the sputum into the container. Make sure you do not touch the inside of the container or lid. You may need to cough hard again so there is at least 2 teaspoons (10 mL) of sputum in the container.



*TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan. Sputum containers. 2016.*

4. Put the lid on the container and close it tightly so it does not leak.
5. Write the date and time you collected the sputum on the container and the requisition (test request form). Make sure your name, date of birth and health number is also printed on the container and requisition.
6. If you were given a biohazard bag, place the container in the bag and seal it. If you were given the requisition, place it in the outside pocket.

If you were given a small plastic bag and paper bag, place the container in the plastic bag with the white dry pad and seal it. Then, place the plastic bag in the paper bag along with the requisition. Do not put the requisition inside the plastic bag.

Other instructions:

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7. Place the bag in the fridge. Do not put it in the freezer.
8. Wash your hands.
9. Once you have collected all 3 samples, bring them to:
10. If you have questions, please call:

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