

Specimen:

Specimens from the lower respiratory tract that are submitted consist of lower respiratory tract secretions and inflammation in the form of expectorated sputum; induced sputum: endotracheal tube aspirations (refer to sputum culture procedure for these); bronchial brushings, washes or alveolar lavages collected during bronchoscopy; and pleural fluids. These specimens may be collected for routine bacteria, fungus, Legionella, TB and/or viral cultures.

Unacceptable Specimens:

- All specimens for routine bacterial cultures will be screened with a Gram stain to determine if the specimen is true sputum (acceptable) or mostly saliva (unacceptable). If the specimen is not satisfactory, you will be notified by the Microbiology Department to collect another specimen. Unsatisfactory specimens will be held for 24 hours. Unsatisfactory specimens may be cultured by special request of the physician if a patient has already been started on antibiotics or if other special circumstances exist.
- Specimens not transported to the Laboratory within one hour of collection, unless refrigerated.
- Specimens sent in *Kleenex*.

Materials Needed:

- Sterile container.

Specimen Collection:

Sputum:

1. The first morning specimen is recommended for the collection of sputum. If more than one sputum is ordered, collect them on successive mornings.
2. Explain procedure and the difference between a good sputum sample and spit to the patient.
3. Have the patient take several deep breaths and then cough up sputum (not saliva) into a sterile container.
4. Label specimen.
5. Deliver specimen to the lab within 1 hour of collection. For off-site collection refrigerate specimen until transport.

Bronchial Washes or BALs:

Once sample is collected by Respiratory Therapy or physician;

1. Label specimen.
2. Deliver specimen to the lab within 1 hour of collection. For off-site collections, refrigerate specimen until transport.

Tracheal Aspirate:

1. Use sterile suction catheter to aspirate from tracheotomy or endotracheal tubes. Place in sterile container. Label and deliver to the Laboratory within one hour of collection.

Transtracheal Aspirates:

1. This technique is not routine and is best performed by an experienced physician.
2. Transtracheal aspirate specimens are acceptable for anaerobic culture, so use an anaerobic transport vial, (BBL Port-A-Cul tube) – See Anaerobic culture test to ensure recovery of these organisms.