

Specimen Collection & Shipment Guide

Specimen Collection Guidelines

<p>Sputum (Specimen of Choice)</p> <p>In pulmonary tuberculosis and the related Mycobacterial diseases, sputum (phlegm from deep in the lungs) is the specimen of choice. A 5 - 10 mL sample of sputum is the desired volume for a single examination. Pooled specimens collected over several hours are not suitable for examination. A series of 3 early morning specimens, collected in clean sterile containers, on consecutive days should be obtained. Collect the initial specimens before antimicrobial therapy is started. Do not use fixatives or preservatives.</p>	<p>Specimens from Sterile Sites</p> <p>These include cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), pleural fluid, ascitic fluid, joint fluid, pus, exudates, biopsy, and autopsy tissues. These are all surgical specimens and should be collected or taken by a physician or surgeon and placed in sterile containers. Tissue may be delivered in sterile saline. Do not add any preservatives. Swabs are not optimal for the recovery of Mycobacteria. They are acceptable only if a specimen cannot be collected by other means. A comment will be added to the final report.</p>
<p>Urine</p> <p>The specimen of choice is a clean catch, midstream, first morning specimen. Urine should be collected in a clean, sterile, screw-capped plastic container. Pooled specimens or 24-hour urines are unacceptable. A series of first morning specimens should be collected on three consecutive days.</p>	<p>Gastric Washings</p> <p>Gastric washings are specimens of last resort because they are highly diluted with gastric fluid, which is damaging to the tubercle bacillus. Specimens should be delivered to the laboratory immediately so neutralization procedures can begin. These samples are not suitable for mailing.</p>

If you are looking to order more TB shipping kits use the [Request for Materials](#) form.

If you are looking for information on how to package your specimen see [Shipping for Category A and B Specimens](#).

If you are looking for the submission form that must accompany all specimens use the [Microbiology Submission Form](#).

For other information about Shipping, please contact the [Shipping and Receiving](#) department.

Shipment of Specimens

Use a clean, sterile, leak-proof disposable screw-capped 50 mL conical centrifuge tube supplied by the ASPHL. To order more of these kits, use the [Request for Materials](#) form. After collection, identify the specimen with the patient's name and **collection date**. *Samples will not be processed for Mycobacteria if not received in the laboratory within 7 days of collection.* Fill out the [Microbiology Submission Form](#) (included with the specimen container obtained from the ASPHL). Include the patient's name, date of birth, submitting agency, test request, and other pertinent demographic information.

Specimens should be refrigerated immediately after collection, prior to shipment. If specimens are to be shipped, it is necessary to place the specimen in a triple-packed mailing container to avoid contamination in the event of leakage. **Diagnostic testing requires a Category B container, but as they are potentially infectious, a Category A mailing container is desired.** The desired mailing container consists of a primary screw cap collection tube, a secondary metal screw-capped container placed within a tertiary screw-capped cardboard outer mailer. These containers are provided by the ASPHL upon request. To order more of these kits, use the [Request for Materials](#) form.

Place the submission form around the outside of the secondary metal container. *Never place the form around the primary container.* The triple-pack mailer is a safety requirement and a postal shipping mandate. Mail specimens as soon as possible after collection, to avoid overgrowth of contaminating bacteria.

Reference specimens may be submitted on tubed solid media or in a liquid culture medium, including Bactec, MGIT, MB-Bacti, and Septi-Chek. **Reference specimens that are mailed or delivered by courier transport must be placed in a Category A container.** These containers are provided by the ASPHL upon request. To order more of these kits, use the [Request for Materials](#) form.

More detailed information regarding how to collect specimens and submit materials can be found in the [Guide to Laboratory Services](#), Section 9: Sample Submission Guidelines and Section 10: Requesting Collection Kits and Mailing Containers.