

How do I get my sample to the hospital?

If possible, please bring your sputum samples to the Lister Hospital and hand it in to the Pathology reception on Level 3.

Alternatively, samples can be taken to either the New QEII Hospital or Hertford County Hospital and handed in at the Pathology department (these are situated near the main reception in each hospital).

Most GP surgeries also have a collection service to the Lister Hospital on weekdays, but please check first as the sample would need to be delivered to your GP in the morning for them to be sent on promptly to the hospital.

If it is likely that there may be a delay of more than a few hours in delivering the sample to the laboratory it should be kept in the fridge.

Contact details

Lister Hospital

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Hertfordshire
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Telephone: 01438 314333

New QEII Hospital

Howlands
Welwyn Garden City
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Hertford County Hospital

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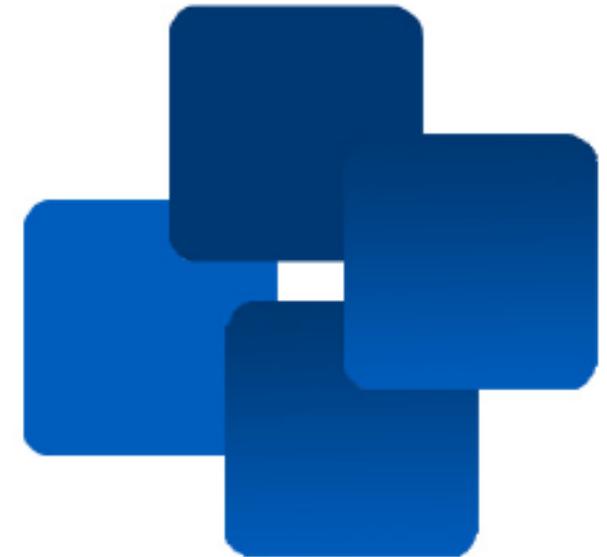
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Sputum Samples

Information for Patients



Lister Hospital
Acute Chest Team

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01438 285869
01438 284220

Introduction

This leaflet explains why we are asking for a sputum (or phlegm) sample and the best way to provide it for us. Please feel free to ask staff any questions about this information.

Why do I need a sputum test?

Testing sputum helps us to tell if there is an infection in your chest, and if so, which germs are causing the infection. This can help us decide on the best treatment to give you.

For the sample to be accurate it must come from deep within the lungs. These samples are usually thick and sticky, unlike saliva from your mouth which is watery and thin.

Will I need to give more than one sample ?

For some patients it may be necessary to send several sputum samples to the lab to help guide best treatment. This may be needed if we are testing for Tuberculosis (TB) for example.

How do I collect the sample?

The most common way is for you to cough a sample into a sterile specimen pot, which we will provide for you.

Ideally the sample should be collected as soon as you wake up in the morning, preferably before drinking anything or having breakfast, otherwise this can affect the results.

First, take a few deep breaths to loosen the secretions. If you use a nebuliser, or do regular exercises to clear your chest, you may want to do this first.

Take another deep breath and cough hard until some sputum comes up into your mouth.

Spit the sputum directly into the sputum pot provided. It is important that no other germs enter the pot, so keep the lid closed until you are ready to use it.

If you are unable to bring up much sputum on your first attempt then try again until you have enough. The minimum useful amount is at least the same size as your little finger nail. Screw the cap on the pot tightly so it doesn't leak.

The pot should normally have a sticker on it with your details on. If not, please write your surname, forename, date of birth and NHS number (if available) clearly on the sticker. Please also write on the date and time of the sputum collection and place in the bag provided. Please ensure the inside pocket of the specimen bag is sealed properly so that the sample does not fall out.

There should also be a folded request form in the outside pocket of the specimen bag which your doctor or nurse provided. This should be kept here for returning the sample.

Sputum samples for possible Tuberculosis (TB)

You may be asked to provide three samples to test for TB. If so, you would normally be given three sputum pots to collect samples in. Collect a sputum sample every morning for three days in a row. Please label each pot as you use it if this has not already been done for you. Use a new container for each sample and leave them sealed in their plastic bags in your fridge until all the samples have been collected.