

# Memorandum

**To:** All Healthcare Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador  
**From:** Public Health Microbiology Laboratory (PHML)  
**Date:** March 12, 2025  
**Re:** Sputum Collection Instructions- Tuberculosis (TB) Diagnosis

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Proper sputum collection is crucial for accurate mycobacterial detection. Inadequate specimens will be rejected, potentially delaying patient diagnosis and management.

Please adhere to the following guidelines to ensure acceptable high-quality specimen collection:

## **Key Instructions for Sputum Collection**

**Test Order Code:** MYCOCUP

**Type of Specimen:** Sputum (spontaneously expectorated or induced)

**Container:** Leak-proof, sterile container

### **Volume Requirements:**

- Three (3) sputum specimens of each should be collected:
  - **Ideal Volume:** 5-10 mL per specimen
  - **Minimum Volume:** 3 mL (<5 mL reduces diagnostic sensitivity)
  - **Rejected Volume:** < 3 mL
- If bacterial culture is also required, a separate specimen must be submitted

### **Collection Protocol:**

- Collect three (3) sputum specimens over one day with at least 1 hour between collections
- One (1) of the specimens should be an early-morning sample.

### **Storage and Transport:**

- Store and transport specimens at 2-8°C. Do not freeze.

### **Important Notes:**

- **Occurrence reports** will be filed on rejected insufficient sputum.
- If the patient cannot produce adequate sputum, consult the ordering physician to arrange alternative collection methods, such as induced sputum or bronchoalveolar lavage.
- For additional guidance on specimen collection such as non-sputum related mycobacterial detection, refer to: <https://publichealthlab.ca/>

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