



**BC Centre for Disease Control**  
Provincial Health Services Authority

Provincial TB Services  
655 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4R4

Tel 604.707.2692  
Fax 604.707.2690

[www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)

# Communicable Disease Control Manual Chapter 4: Tuberculosis

## Appendix C: Collection of Specimens for TB Testing



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## Appendix C: Collection of Specimens for TB Testing

### Sputum Collection

Collect three sputum specimens for AFB smear and culture.

- Whether spontaneous or induced, specimens may be collected on the same day, at least 1 hour apart. Ideally 1 specimen will be collected in the morning, prior to eating or drinking.
- Sputum may also be collected daily, for 3 days in a row (ideally in the morning).
- Use the [PHSA Mycobacteriology/TB Requisition](#) forms and ensure TB Services is included in the “Additional Copies to Practitioner/Clinic” section.

### Consultation

Contact the TB Nurse Consultants for discussion of specific TB laboratory tests, results regarding sputum specimen collection or guidance on the management of clients who are unable to spontaneously produce sputum (e.g., frail elderly, young children). For more information on sputum induction, refer to [Appendix D](#).

### Requirements for Collection

- **Submit all specimens** in sterile, screw-cap leak-proof containers. Ensure that the specimen container is tightly closed. Do not use caps containing cardboard liners, as they will soak up the specimen. Label specimen containers legibly.
  - **Leaking specimens are not processed.**
- **Submit one specimen container per biohazard bag.**
  - Each bag must contain a requisition in the **side pocket** that includes **two** patient identifiers (e.g., full name, date of birth) **identical** to the patient information on the specimen container.
  - If possible, provide a brief summary of patient history and findings on the laboratory requisition. This information may be important for the assessment of significance of [nontuberculous mycobacteria \(NTM\)](#) isolates.
- **Do NOT** submit specimens for mycobacterial culture in alcohol, formalin, or other preservatives.
- Submit specimens for stomach/gastric lavages in a TB treated glass jar in a sealable biohazard bag. Request prepared jars 2 weeks in advance. Access the sample container order form [here](#).
- Body fluids that are bloody (e.g. pleural, pericardial, peritoneal) should be submitted in containers with anticoagulant and the anticoagulant should be SPS, but Sodium citrate or Heparin is acceptable. Do not use EDTA, as it inhibits the growth of mycobacteria.
- When sending specimens for histopathology examination, at least one additional specimen should be collected/submitted appropriately for mycobacterial culture (i.e., not submitted in alcohol, formalin, or other preservatives).
- Refrigerate (at 4°C) gastric lavage fluid, lymph node or other tissue biopsy samples, sputum or urine specimens before and during transport to the laboratory. **Exceptions:** blood culture and cerebrospinal fluid specimens.
- Specimens or samples suspected of containing *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* must be transported as **Category B, Type P650** packaging. Refer to regulations for [Transport of Dangerous Goods](#).



## Client Education

### Resources:

- Video: "[How to get a good sputum sample for your tuberculosis test](#)". Also available in seven other subtitled languages on the [BCCDC's YouTube channel](#).
- HealthlinkBC Healthfiles: [Sputum Testing for TB](#).

## BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

The [eLab Handbook](#) provides:

- [PHSA Mycobacteriology/TB Requisition](#) forms
- Quick Tips
- Before You Collect considerations
- Processing information
- Specimen Requirements (e.g. Directions for collection)
- Transport guidance
- Questions: Contact the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory (BCCDC PHL) Mycobacteriology/TB laboratory at 604-707-2630.



## Accessing the eLab Handbook

No.	Field	Instruction
1	Choose your Home Lab	Select "BCCDC Public Health Laboratory" from drop-down menu
2	Search For Test	Type "mycobacterium" and select "Go"
3	Test Name	Choose appropriate test from records returned

Welcome: Public View Only (Public)

BC Centre for Disease Control  
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Home Tests Log off / Sign In As Different User LM LABS

eLab Handbook

SEARCH FOR TEST  
mycobacterium

Go

Name(s)  Mnemonic

Search Condition:

Anywhere

Start

Exact

Reset

Welcome to eLab Handbook

Choose your home lab: BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

eLab handbook is a convenient point-of-reference for health care professionals for test information including: ordering procedures, processing information, specimen collection instructions, and handling and transport instructions.

Available test information

Currently the tests from the following Lower Mainland Labs (LM Labs) are available for viewing:

- BC Children's & Women's Hospital Laboratory
- BC Centre for Disease Control Public Health Laboratory

How to search for tests

Search by Laboratory

- You can search for tests across both labs without selecting a lab or
- You can select a lab above to refine your search

To find the test you are looking for

- Search by whole or part of a test name in the Search for Test field to the left and click Go.
- From the list of tests displayed, simply click on the test name to open the test details.
- To further refine your search
  - Filter the list of tests by lab, division and section and/or
  - Sort the list of tests alphabetically by clicking on the column headings.

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Home Tests Log off / Sign In As Different User LM LABS

eLab Handbook

SEARCH FOR TEST  
mycobacterium

Go

Name(s)  Mnemonic

Search Condition:

Anywhere

Start

Exact

Reset

> Tests > Manage Tests

Search For Test

Labs: BCCDC Public Health Labora

Divisions: All Divisions

Sections: All Sections

Status: Signed Off

Changed Since(mm/dd/yyyy)

Clear Selection

Total records returned: 7

Lab	Test Name	Division	Section	Last Changed
BCCDC	<a href="#">Genomic Subtyping for Mycobacterium tuberculosis</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	26-Jul-23
BCCDC	<a href="#">Mycobacteria tuberculosis Soutum Smear and Culture</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	08-Feb-23
BCCDC	<a href="#">Leucocy</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	08-Aug-22
BCCDC	<a href="#">Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex NAT (TB NAT), Mycobacterium avium complex NAT (MAC NAT)</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	22-Feb-22
BCCDC	<a href="#">Tuberculosis Interferon Gamma Release Assays</a>	Zoonotic Diseases and Emerging Pathogens	Not Assigned	13-Jan-22
BCCDC	<a href="#">Mycobacterium tuberculosis Non-Soutum Smear and Culture</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	31-May-18
BCCDC	<a href="#">Mycobacteria Culture Identification</a>	Mycobacteriology/TB	Not Assigned	31-May-18