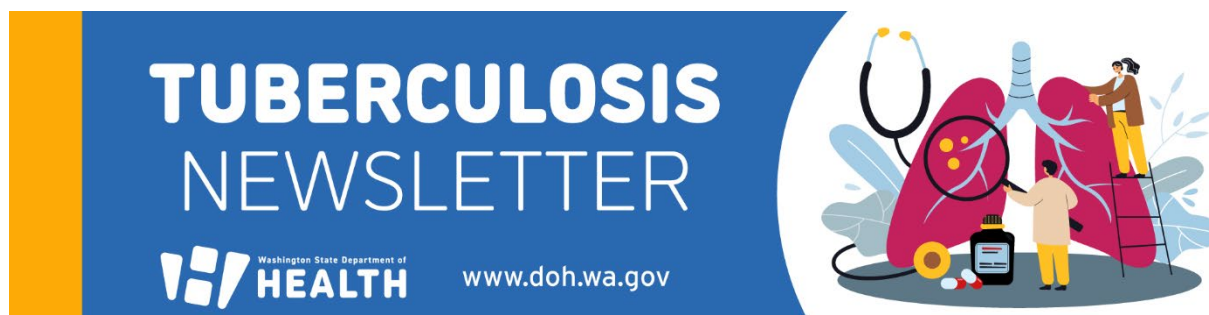




August 2026

Shipping TB Sputum Specimens: Tips During the Transition to Commercial Carriers

Keep Supplies Stocked

Make sure you always have everything needed to collect, seal, and ship specimens.

- Order TB collection kits and other supplies using the [PHL Laboratory Supply Order Form](#).
- The PHL does **not** provide Parafilm. Order it from your usual medical supply vendor or other source so you can properly seal collection tubes.

Order Extra TB Shipping Boxes

Each TB Box includes **three** collection packs but only **one** shipping box. Because specimens should **not** be batched, many lower volume programs will ship **one specimen at a time**, leaving 2 unused collection packs without a box.

You can order **additional empty TB Boxes** from the PHL. Ordering **one case of TB Boxes** provides **four empty boxes**, which helps ensure you always have a box ready when a single specimen needs to be shipped.

Follow Packaging Instructions Carefully

The [TB Specimen Submission Instructions](#) explain how to seal, label, and pack sputum specimens. The guide notes that *“Improperly sealed or leaking specimens cannot be accepted.”* Precise packaging helps prevent leaks and protects staff.

Ship Early in the Week

The PHL may not be able to accept shipments on weekends. Ship specimens **Monday through Wednesday** whenever possible to avoid delays.

Ship Promptly After Collection

The PHL cannot accept specimens collected **more than 5 days ago**. Even specimens shipped sooner can become **overgrown** if they are not kept cool or if shipping is delayed. Overgrown specimens must be rejected, which creates extra work for staff and may inconvenience patients who need to recollect. When specimens cannot be shipped promptly after collection, keep them refrigerated until ready to ship.

Use Ice Packs in Warm Weather

Temperature control is essential. Ice packs help maintain specimen integrity during transit, especially in warmer months.

Choose the Carrier and Service That Works Best for Your Program

You may use any commercial carrier that meets your needs. Some programs find that 2-day air services via FedEx still arrive in 1 day and can reduce costs. Select the option that works best for your workflow and budget.

If Using FedEx

Many programs will use FedEx. If you do:

- **Set up a FedEx business account** to reduce shipping costs—often significantly.
- FedEx no longer uses paper air waybills. You will need to **create shipping labels online and print them**.
- With an account, you can **save the PHL's shipping information** to make label creation faster, more consistent, and less prone to error.

If you have questions about packaging and shipping specimens, please contact Meghan Riddell, Central Accessioning Supervisor, at meghan.riddell@doh.wa.gov.