

Mycoplasma (Sputum)



Does this test have other names?

Mycoplasma culture, antigen capture-enzyme immunoassay, Ag-EIA, Mycoplasma pneumoniae culture

What is this test?

This test looks at sputum, or the mucus from your lower airways. It finds out whether you have a lung infection caused by *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. These are organisms that can cause bronchitis and pneumonia. *Mycoplasma* are very small and are similar to bacteria. They are unique because they don't have cell walls.

Mycoplasma pneumoniae is most often found in young adults and school-aged children. It is sometimes called walking pneumonia because people with this illness may not be sick enough to stay in bed or see a healthcare provider. If you have *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, you can easily infect others who come in close contact with you.

Sometimes a sputum culture test is done, but *Mycoplasma* don't grow well in a culture. The more common sputum test is called indirect enzyme immunoassay.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your healthcare provider suspects that you have *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. The most common symptom is a dry, hacking cough. Other symptoms are like those of other respiratory infections:

- Fever
- Headaches
- Chills
- Sweating
- Chest pain
- Ear pain
- Sore throat

What other tests might I have along with this test?

You may also have a chest X-ray to diagnose pneumonia. If you are in the hospital, you may have your blood oxygen level measured. You may have polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, and DNA testing on throat swabs to help diagnose a *Mycoplasma* infection. You may also have blood tests, including cold agglutinins and specific antibody tests.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Normal results are negative, meaning you don't have *Mycoplasma*.

How is this test done?

This test is done with a sample of your sputum. The sample is often collected when you first wake up in the morning. To collect the sample, rinse your mouth with water before providing the sample. Then you will need to cough deeply into a sterile container. Your healthcare provider may have to suction a sample from your respiratory tract with a thin, flexible tube called a bronchoscope.

Does this test pose any risks?

Your throat may feel sore after providing a mucus or sputum sample.

What might affect my test results?

Taking antibiotics could reduce the amount of bacteria present. The timing of your test can also affect your results.

How do I get ready for this test?

Follow your healthcare provider's directions about not eating for several hours before providing a sample. Tell your healthcare provider if you have been taking antibiotics and if you have had any recent health conditions or illnesses. Also be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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