

# What You Need to Know About the

# TB Skin Test

TUBERCULOSIS

“I was told I needed a TB skin test, so I went to the health clinic. It was quick and didn’t hurt. In two days, I went back to the clinic so the nurse could see the results. It’s important to go back in 2 or 3 days to get your results or you will have to get the test again.”



## A TB skin test will tell you if you have ever had TB germs in your body.

- A harmless fluid is placed under your skin on the inside of your arm. A very small needle is used, so you will only feel a light pinch.
- Make sure you don’t put a bandage or lotion on the test spot. Also—don’t scratch the spot. If the area itches, put an ice cube or cold cloth on it. It is okay for the test spot to get wet, but do not wipe or scrub the area.
- Return to the clinic or doctor’s office in 2 to 3 days so your healthcare provider can look at the test spot on your arm. He or she will look at the test spot and measure any bump that appears there. Your healthcare provider will let you know if your test is negative or positive.

Write the time and date you will need to return here:

\_\_\_\_\_.

**Remember—only a healthcare provider can read your TB skin test results the right way.**



## When your skin test is positive:

- You have TB germs in your body.
- You may need to get an x-ray of your chest or give a phlegm sample. These extra tests will help show if you have TB disease or TB infection.
- Your doctor or healthcare provider may ask if you have HIV. TB infection and HIV together can make you very sick very quickly. If you don’t know if you have HIV, your doctor or healthcare provider may suggest you take an HIV test.

## The good news:

TB can be CURED if you follow the medicine plan you and your doctor set up.



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for HIV/AIDS,  
Viral Hepatitis, STD, and  
TB Prevention

## Did you know?

Once you have a positive TB skin test you will always have a positive TB skin test, even if you complete treatment. Ask your doctor for a written record of your positive skin test result. This will be helpful if you are asked to have another TB skin test in the future.

### When your TB skin test is negative:

- You don't have TB germs in your body.

OR

- TB germs are not showing up in your body at this time. Sometimes the test may have been done too soon to show the TB germs.



### If your TB skin test is negative, you still may need to have more tests if:

- You have been around someone with TB disease.
- Your TB skin test was within 8 weeks of your exposure to TB.
- You have signs of TB disease, like coughing, chest pain, fever, weight loss, or tiredness.
- You have HIV infection, since the TB skin test may not react the way it should.



### The facts on the BCG vaccine and TB:

“I always thought that because I got a BCG vaccine, my TB skin test would be positive. My doctor said that some people who get BCG vaccines have positive skin tests and some have negative skin tests. I learned that a positive TB skin test result often means a person has TB infection, even if they had the BCG vaccine.”

**Get a TB skin test if your healthcare provider says you need one. For more information on TB, call your local health department at**

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**or visit the CDC Division of Tuberculosis Elimination website at <http://www.cdc.gov/tb>**