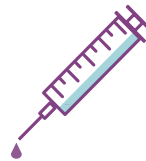


# What You Need to Know About the TB Skin Test

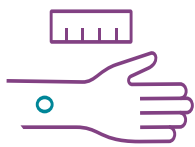
Getting tested and treated for **tuberculosis (TB)** can protect yourself, your family and friends, and your community. There are two types of tests for TB infection: the TB blood test and the TB skin test. This fact sheet provides information on the TB skin test.

## TB Skin Test

The TB skin test, also known as the tuberculin skin test, may be used to find out if you are infected with TB germs. A health care worker will use a small needle to inject testing fluid (called tuberculin) under the skin on the lower part of your inner arm.



## After Receiving the TB Skin Test



After the test, you should avoid using bandages, putting on lotion, or scratching the test area because it may affect the results. You can wash the area with water, but do not wipe or scrub. If the area itches, put an ice cube or cold cloth on it.

After 2 or 3 days, you must return to have a health care worker read your skin test. You may have swelling or a bump where the testing fluid was injected. The health care worker will measure the bump or swelling and will tell you if your skin test reaction is positive or negative.

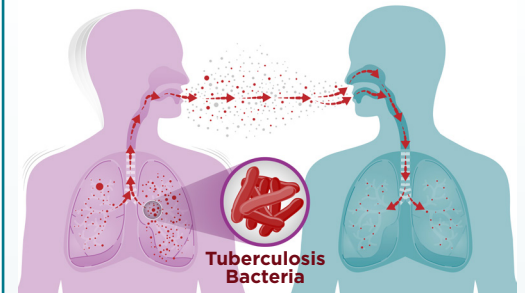
**If you are not able to return within 2 to 3 days, you will need to repeat the skin test again.**

### Return to have your skin test read

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_



TB germs spread through the air from one person to another. Anyone can get TB. TB germs usually attack the lungs but can move to any part of your body.

The bacteria responsible for causing TB can live in the body for years without symptoms. This is called latent TB infection or inactive TB. People with inactive TB do not have signs and symptoms of active TB disease and cannot spread TB bacteria to others.

Without treatment, inactive TB can become active TB disease at any time and make you sick. If not treated properly, active TB disease can be fatal.



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## If your skin test is POSITIVE:

- You have TB germs in your body.
- The test does **not** tell whether you have inactive TB or active TB disease. You will need other tests, such as a physical examination, chest x-ray, and lab work to determine if you have active TB disease.
- Once you test positive for TB, you will always have a positive skin test even if you complete treatment for TB. Ask your health care provider for a written record of your positive TB skin test result. This will be helpful if you are asked to have another test in the future.



## If your TB skin test is NEGATIVE:

- Your body did not react to the test. You likely do not have inactive TB or active TB disease.
- You may need to have more tests if:
  - » You have symptoms of active TB disease, like coughing, chest pain, fever, weight loss, or tiredness.
  - » You have HIV infection.
  - » Your exposure to TB germs was recent. You may need a second skin test 8 to 10 weeks after the last time you spent time with someone with active TB disease. This is because it can take several weeks after infection for your immune system to react to the TB skin test. If your reaction to the second test is negative, you likely do not have inactive TB or active TB disease.

## Did You Receive the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) Vaccine?



BCG is a vaccine for TB. This vaccine is not widely used in the United States. Many people born outside of the United States have received the BCG TB vaccine.

It is often given to infants and small children in other countries where TB is more common. It protects children in those countries from getting severe forms of active TB disease, such as TB meningitis. Protection from TB goes away as people get older.

**Let your health care provider know if you were previously vaccinated with the BCG TB vaccine.**

In some people, the BCG TB vaccine may cause a positive TB skin test even if they are not infected with TB germs. Unlike the TB skin test, TB blood tests are not affected by prior BCG vaccination. Therefore, TB blood tests are the preferred test for people who have received the BCG TB vaccine.

## TB Can Be Treated

If you have inactive TB, you can take medicine to prevent the development of active TB disease even if you do not feel sick.

TB germs can live in your body for years without causing symptoms. Without treatment, inactive TB can develop into active TB disease and make you sick.

If you have been diagnosed with active TB disease, you will need to take and finish all your TB medicine. This is to help you feel better and prevent other people from getting sick.

