CCHCS Care Guide: TB Contact Investigation

TB CONTACT INVESTIGATIONS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

How is TB spread?

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. From there, they can move through the blood to other parts of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

TB disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. This means that the bacteria can be spread to other people. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious.

People with TB disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day.

What is a TB contact investigation?

- When someone has active TB disease, it is very important to find out if the disease has spread to other people. When health care workers look to see if the disease has spread, it is called a contact investigation.
- A person with TB disease can spread the infection without even knowing it.
- If TB has spread to other people, they will need medicine so they don't get sick.
- Tuberculosis disease and latent TB infection can be cured with proper medical treatment.
- Information that you give to a health care worker during a TB contact investigation is confidential.

What happens in a TB contact investigation?

- Health care workers will determine who may have been exposed to TB germs.
- People exposed will need to be tested for TB.

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

- For a TB skin test, 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 a cold cloth on it. It is okay for the test spot to get wet, but do not wipe or scrub the area.
- In 2 to 3 days your health care provider will 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 health care provider will let you know if your test is negative or positive.

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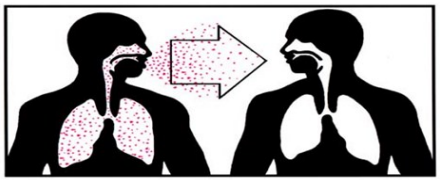
TB SKIN TEST (MANTOUX): WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

What is the TB Skin Test?

The tuberculosis (TB) skin test, sometimes called a "Mantoux," is a simple, harmless way to find out if you have latent TB infection.

What is latent TB infection?



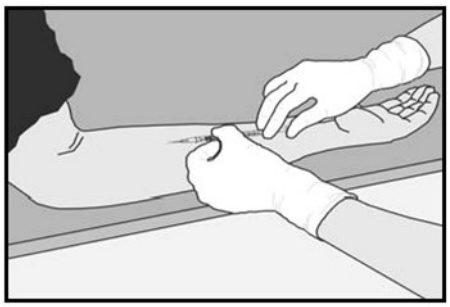
There are two phases of TB. Both phases can be treated with medicine. When TB germs first enter your body, they cause latent (silent) TB infection. You will have no symptoms with latent infection. Without treatment, latent TB infection can become active TB disease. Anyone can get TB because it spreads from one person to another through the air.

Phase 1 – Latent TB Infection	Phase 2 – Active TB Disease
TB germs are "asleep" in your body. This phase can last for a long time (even many years.)	TB germs are active and spreading. They are damaging tissue in your body. TB disease usually affects the lungs but it may affect other organs.
You don't look or feel sick. Your chest x-ray is usually normal.	You usually feel sick. Your doctor will do special tests to find where TB is harming your body.
You can't spread TB to other people.	If the TB germs are in your lungs, you can spread TB to other people by coughing, sneezing, talking, or singing.
Usually treated by taking 1 or 2 medicines for 3 to 9 months.	Treated with 4 medicines for at least 2 months, then usually 2 medicines for at least another 4 months.

How can I tell if I have latent TB infection?

A TB skin test ("Mantoux") can show if you have latent TB infection. You could have latent TB infection if you have ever spent time close to someone with active TB disease (even if you didn't know they were sick).

Your nurse will use a small needle to inject some harmless testing fluid (called "tuberculin") under the skin on your arm.



Your nurse MUST check your arm 2 or 3 days after the TB skin test, even if your arm looks OK to you.

If you have a reaction to the test, it will look like a raised bump. Your nurse will measure the size of the reaction. If there is a bump, it will go away in a few weeks.

TB SKIN TEST (MANTOUX): WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW (CONT.)

What if I've had BCG vaccine?

- Even if you have had BCG vaccine, you can have a TB skin test.
- People who have had BCG vaccine still can get latent TB infection and active TB disease.
- BCG vaccine may help protect young children from getting very sick with TB. This protection goes away as people get older.
- BCG vaccine may sometimes cause a positive TB skin test reaction. However, if you have a positive reaction to the TB skin test, it probably is from TB germs in your body - not from BCG vaccine.

How do I take care of my arm after the TB skin test?

- Don't cover the spot with a bandage or tape.
- Be careful not to rub it or scratch it.
- If the spot itches, put a cold cloth on it.
- You can wash your arm and dry it gently.

When your TB skin test is negative:

- On the third day after the injection, you have little or no hardening at the site of the injection.
- 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. You may need a repeat TB skin test within about 8 weeks of your exposure if this is true.
- Signs of TB disease, like coughing, chest pain, fever, weight loss, or tiredness.
- Certain medicines or HIV infection, since the TB skin test may not react the way it should. 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

When your TB skin test is positive:

- On the third day after the injection, you have a hardening of a certain size at the injection site.
- You have TB germs in your body.
- You may need to get an x-ray of your chest or give a sputum sample. These extra tests will help show if you have TB disease or TB infection.
- Your doctor or health care 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 health care provider may suggest you take an HIV test