

Tubersol[®] Tuberculin (TB) Skin Test

Information Sheet

The tuberculin skin test involves putting a small needle in the arm. **The skin test must be read in 48 to 72 hours, which means that you must return to the Health Unit for a nurse to look at the area where the needle was given and to receive a record of the test results.** A test is said to be positive if a bump of a certain size has developed where the needle was given. A positive skin test **does not** mean that you are sick with tuberculosis. In most cases, all it means is that you may have been exposed to the tuberculosis bacteria at some time during your life.

If you have a positive skin test, you will be asked to see your doctor. Your doctor will do a medical examination and chest x-ray to be sure you are not sick with tuberculosis. Your doctor may want to place you on some medication to prevent tuberculosis from developing.

You may have been asked to get a 2-step TB test. This means coming back to the Health Unit for another test if the first test is negative. The second test should be at least one week after the first test is completed and preferably within three weeks after the first test. There is a cost for each step if you do not qualify to have the test(s) for free under certain criteria.

Who should not have a TB skin test

- Anyone with a reliable history of being TB skin test positive in the past.
- Anyone with a history of active TB disease in the past or history of treatment for TB infection or disease in the past.
- Anyone who is allergic to any component of the Tubersol[®] or any vaccine that contains the components of Tubersol[®] which includes phenol.
- Anyone with extensive burns, eczema or other skin lesions where the TB skin test is to be administered.
- Anyone who has received a live virus vaccine (e.g. MMR, shingles, or chickenpox) in the 4 weeks before the TB skin test is given. A TB skin test can be done on the same day as live vaccines. If not given on the same day, the TB skin test must not be done until at least 4 weeks after the live vaccines. This is because the live vaccines can reduce the immune response to the TB skin test.
- Anyone with a major viral illness (e.g. mononucleosis, mumps, measles) in the past month (this does not include having common cold symptoms).

Note: The following are NOT contraindications for TB skin testing: pregnancy, breastfeeding, past history of BCG vaccination, vaccination with a non-live vaccine in the past 4 weeks or treatment with low-dose steroids.