

# TUBERCULOSIS TB SKIN TEST

## What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection mostly found in the lungs, but can also affect other parts of the body such as the brain, lymph glands and bones. Only TB of the lungs or throat may be infectious.

## What is the TB skin test for?

The test is known as a **Mantoux test** and shows whether your body has ever been exposed to the bacteria before. You could have been exposed through having the BCG vaccination as a baby or at school, or through breathing in the TB bacteria.

## How is the test done?

The test involves injecting a small amount of a vaccine called Tuberculin into the top layer of the skin. A small needle and syringe are used.

**The test site is examined by the nurse or doctor 48 hours later.**

## Does the skin test hurt?

It is not usually painful. Some people are aware of a stinging sensation, but this does not last long.

## What kind of reaction could I get?

You may notice one of two things after the test.

- *No changes at the test site*
- *A reaction in the form of some redness and or some slight swelling*

## What does a reaction mean?

The presence of *some redness and /or some slight swelling* at the test site can mean that:-

- *You have had the BCG vaccination before. If so, a small reaction is expected and is normal.*
- *You may have latent TB infection. This means that you have the bacteria inside you and your body has made antibodies against them to stop you becoming unwell.*
- *You may have Tuberculosis. This is when you are unwell and need to consult your GP for further tests.*

If the redness and swelling at the test site are severe, then further investigation such as a chest x-ray may be recommended.

## What does no reaction mean?

This indicates that you probably have not been exposed to TB infection before.

However it could also mean that you have been tested too soon after exposure, or that your body's defences are unable to react to the test.

The test may need to be repeated in 6 weeks' time. No reaction or no changes at the test site does not always mean that you do not have TB.

The nurse or doctor may offer you a BCG vaccine when there is no reaction or no changes at the test site.

## How do I look after the test site?

### Do:

- *Wash/shower/bathe as normal with soap and water*
- *Pat the test area dry*

### Do Not:

- *Cover the test site with a plaster*
- *Put any creams/oils/cosmetics on the area*
- *Scratch the area*

## It is important to return to the clinic on the date agreed.

### Are there any side effects?

Side effects are very unusual. However, should you feel unwell or think that the test has affected you in any way, please phone the nurse at Occupational Health or seek medical advice.

### Occupational Health Services

[www.manchester.ac.uk/occupational-health](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/occupational-health)

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