

# What to Know About the TB Blood 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 blood test.**

## TB Blood Test

TB blood tests (also called interferon-gamma release assays or IGRAs) use a blood sample to find out if you are infected with TB germs. The tests measure how your immune system reacts when a small amount of your blood is mixed with TB proteins.

## BCG and TB Blood Test

Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is a vaccine for TB disease. The vaccine is not generally used in the United States. It is given to infants and small children in countries where TB is common. It protects children from getting severe forms of active TB disease, such as TB meningitis.

Tell your health care provider if you have received the TB vaccine, especially if you are getting tested for TB infection. The vaccine can cause a false positive TB skin test reaction. TB blood tests are the preferred tests for people who have received the BCG TB vaccine.

**A positive blood test result for TB infection means you have TB germs in your body. Additional testing and an assessment is needed to determine if the person has latent infection or active TB disease. Approximately 10% of people with TB infection will progress to active TB disease at some point in their lives.**



# What 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.**

