

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that is spread from person to person through the air. The germs are put into the air when a person with TB of the lungs coughs, sneezes, laughs, or speaks. TB usually affects the lungs but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain or the spine.



What are the symptoms of TB?

General symptoms may include:

- feeling weak or sick
- weight loss
- fever and/or sweats

Symptoms of TB of the lungs may also include:

- cough
- chest pain
- coughing up blood

Other symptoms depend on the part of the body that is affected.

Who gets TB?

Anyone can get TB, but some people are at higher risk. Those at higher risk include:

- People who share the same breathing space (such as family members, friends and co-workers) with someone who has TB disease in their lungs
- People born in countries where a lot of people have TB
- Nursing home residents
- Persons in jails
- Alcoholics and intravenous drug users
- People with medical conditions such as diabetes, certain types of cancers, and being underweight
- People with HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS) or other conditions that weaken the immune system

What is the difference between TB infection and TB disease?

People with TB disease are sick from germs that are active in their bodies. They usually have one or more symptoms of TB. These people are often capable of infecting others with TB germs. Medicines which can cure TB are prescribed for these people.

People with TB infection have the germ that causes TB in their bodies. They are not sick because the germ is inactive in their bodies. They cannot spread the germs to others.

However, these people may develop TB disease in the future. Medicine is often prescribed for these people to prevent them from developing TB disease.

How can I tell if I have TB?

See your doctor if you think you have TB symptoms. He will probably recommend a TB test. There are two types of tests available, the TB skin test and the QuantiFERON® TB Gold (QFT) blood test.

If you have a positive reaction to either of the tests, you will probably be given other tests to see if you have TB infection or TB disease.

Where can I get a TB skin test or QFT?

You can get a TB skin test from your doctor or local health department. You may be able to get the QFT at your doctor or your local health department.



How are the tests given?

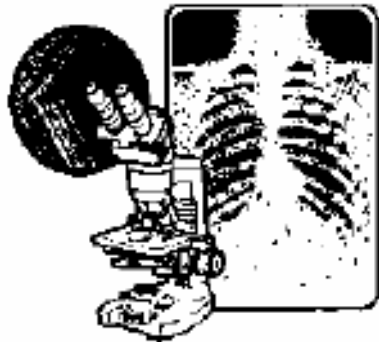
For the skin test a small needle is used to put some testing material, called tuberculin, on the inside of the forearm. The person getting the test must return in 48 to 72 hours to have the test read by a health provider. If there is a reaction on the arm, the size of the reaction is measured.

If your health department does offer the QFT, some of your blood is taken for the test. You will be instructed on how to get the results of your tests.

What if the test is negative?

A negative test usually means that the person is not infected with the TB germ. However, the test may be falsely negative in a person who has been recently infected. It usually takes 2 to 10 weeks after exposure to a person with TB disease for the skin test to turn positive. The test may also be falsely negative if the person's immune system is weakened.

A negative QFT usually means you are not infected.



What if the test is positive?

A positive skin test or QFT usually means that the person has been infected with the TB germ. This person is said to have TB infection. It does not necessarily mean that the person has TB disease. Other tests, such as an x-ray, are needed to see if the person has TB disease.

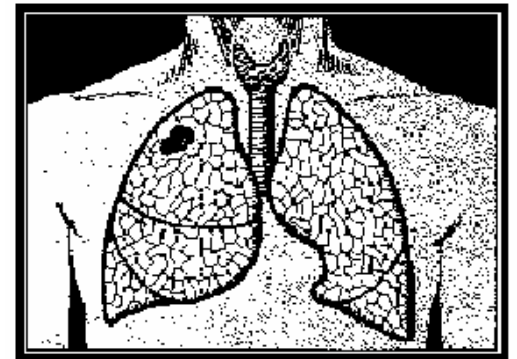
What should I do if I have TB infection or TB disease?

Get required follow-up tests. Follow your doctor's advice and take the medicine as prescribed. Today, TB infection and TB disease can be effectively treated!



County of San Diego

TUBERCULOSIS



Get the Facts!

Adapted from brochure prepared by the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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You may qualify for Medi-Cal benefits.
*People with TB infection or TB disease may also
qualify for TB-Cal. To find out about your
eligibility and to request an information packet
and application, please call 1-858-514-6885.
Collect calls are accepted.*