

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by the TB bacteria (germ). TB usually affects the lungs but it can affect any part of the body.

TB is spread through the air from person to person when someone with active TB in their lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks.

People who breathe air containing the TB bacteria may become infected and develop latent TB infection.

People with latent TB have the bacteria in their body but their immune system is keeping it under control. They will not be ill and they cannot spread the TB to others.

If the immune system cannot keep the bacteria under control it will begin to grow and multiply. This is called active TB disease. People with active TB may feel ill, they may be able to spread TB to others and they require treatment.

You should be tested for TB if you have:

- been exposed to someone with active TB
- been coughing for 3 weeks or longer
- fever lasting for more than 1 week
- pneumonia that does not go away with antibiotics
- unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite
- been coughing up blood
- night sweats or chills

If you have question or concerns about the test once you leave the test centre, please phone:

What is a tuberculin skin test (TST)?

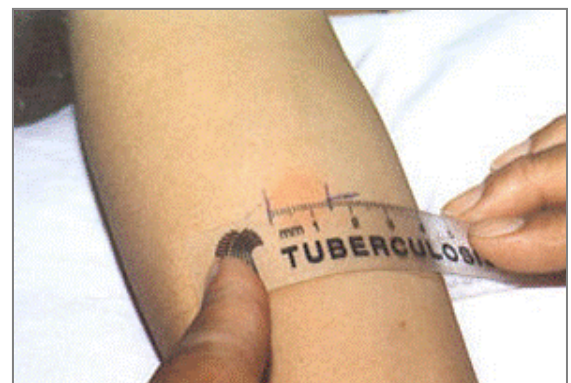
The TST is a simple and safe test to determine if you have been infected with TB. It is not a treatment or a vaccine and it cannot cause TB.



"Mantoux tuberculin skin test" by Greg Knobloch, Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

A small injection is given under the skin, usually on the inner forearm. A small wheal (pale, raised mark) will appear at the site. The wheal will disappear in about 15 minutes.

The site is checked 48 to 72 hours later by a health-care provider to see if there is a reaction (lump). A lump may develop at the injection site if you have been infected with TB. The size of the lump will be measured and recorded. The lump will eventually disappear.



TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan. Measuring induration. 2002.

Who can have a TST?

Most people can have a TST, including infants, children, adults, and pregnant women. If you received certain vaccines within the previous 4 weeks, the test may need to be postponed.

Who should not have a TST?

People with a severe reaction to a past TST or allergies to the TST solution.

Before the test:

Notify the nurse if you have:

- had a positive TST in the past
- received a vaccine in the last 4 weeks
- life-threatening allergies
- recently been ill
- received TB medication in the past
- a medical condition or are taking medication that may weaken your immune system

After the test:

You will need to wait at least 15 minutes before leaving the test centre in case you have an adverse reaction to the test. These reactions are very rare.

A bruise or redness may appear at the site. This is normal.

You must return to the test centre in 48 to 72 hours so the test result can be measured. If you do not return within 72 hours you will need to be re-tested.

Care of the injection site:

- Do not scratch or massage the site.
- Apply a cool cloth if you have pain or itching.
- Do not place an adhesive bandage (Band-Aid®), dressing, creams or ointments over the site.
- If you develop a blister, do not break it.
- Continue normal activities such as bathing, showering, working and sports activities.

What do the test results mean?

A **negative TST** means you likely do not have the TB bacteria in your body. You may need to have a second test to be sure.

A **positive TST** usually means you have the TB bacteria in your body.

If you have a positive TST you will need to see a doctor and have other tests such as a chest x-ray.

Your tuberculin skin test information may be sent to TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan and recorded in a computerized system known as the TB Information System (TBIS). Information collected in TBIS may be used for public health surveillance and to manage your TB record. Your TST record may be shared with health-care professionals to provide public health services and to assist with the diagnosis, treatment and control of TB.

For more information, contact TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan at 1-866-780-6482 or
Saskatoon Main Office (306) 655-1740
Prince Albert Office (306) 765-4260
Regina Office (306) 766-4311

