

## What is a TB blood test?

The tuberculosis (TB) blood test, also called an interferon Gamma Release Assay or IGRA, is one way to find out if you have TB germs in your body.

The two available blood tests are **QuantiFERON®-TB** and **T-SPOT®.TB**.

### You should have a TB test if you:

- have had frequent close contact with someone who has active infectious TB,
- have lived in a country where many people have TB,
- work or live in a nursing home, clinic, hospital, prison, or homeless shelter, or
- your immune system is not very strong.

Children less than 2 years old should have the TB skin test instead of the TB blood test.

### How can I get a TB blood test?

Ask your health care provider. They will draw a small amount of blood and send it to a laboratory. Your health care provider should tell you if your test result is negative or positive in a few days.

### What if my TB test result is negative?

A negative TB blood test result usually means you don't have TB germs in your body.

### What if my TB test result is positive?

A positive TB blood test result means you probably have TB germs in your body. Most people with a positive TB blood test have latent TB infection. To be sure, your health care provider will examine you and do a chest x-ray. You may need other tests to see if you have latent TB infection or active TB.

### What is latent TB infection?

There are two phases of TB. Both phases can be treated with medicine.

When TB germs enter your body, they cause latent TB infection. Without treatment, latent TB infection can become active TB.

Phase 1 – Latent TB Infection	Phase 2 – Active TB
TB germs are dormant ('asleep') in your body. This phase can last for a long time – even many years.	TB germs are active ('awake') and spreading. They are damaging tissue in your body.
You don't look or feel sick. Your chest x-ray is usually normal.	You usually feel sick. Your health care provider will do special tests to find where the TB germs are harming your body.
You can't spread TB germs to other people.	If the TB germs are in your lungs, you can spread TB to other people by coughing, sneezing, talking, or singing.
Treated by taking one or two medicines for three to four months.	Treated by taking three or four medicines for at least six months.

### What if I've had the BCG vaccine?

The BCG vaccine (TB vaccine) helps protect young children from getting very sick with active TB. This protection goes away as people get older.

People who have had the BCG vaccine can still get latent TB infection and active TB.

If you had the BCG vaccine and you have a choice of having a TB blood test or a TB skin test, it is better for you to have the TB blood test. This is because the TB blood test is not affected by the BCG vaccine. This means your TB blood test will be positive only if you have TB germs in your body.

Protect your health and the health of your family – get a TB blood test!

Minnesota Department of Health  
Tuberculosis (TB) Prevention and Control  
1-877-676-5414 or 651-201-5414  
[www.health.state.mn.us/tb](http://www.health.state.mn.us/tb)

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