

# TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

## FACT SHEET



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**Tuberculosis (TB)** is a treatable bacterial disease that is spread from person to person through the air. TB usually infects the lungs but can affect other parts of the body as well. TB is spread through the air when a person with active TB disease coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings.

While TB is contagious, it's not as easily spread as other illnesses, such as the flu or cold. People cannot get TB from shaking someone's hand, sharing food or drink, sharing toothbrushes or school supplies, kissing, or touching bed linens or toilet seats.

### What are the symptoms of TB? How to screen for TB

TB of the lungs may include cough, chest pain, and/or coughing up blood. The general symptoms of TB disease include feeling sick or weak, weight loss, fever, chills, and night sweats.

### What is the difference between latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease?

#### Persons with latent TB infection:

- Have no symptoms and do not feel sick
- Cannot spread TB to others
- Usually have a positive IGRA or TST
- Normal chest x-ray

#### Persons with active TB disease:

- May have symptoms that include prolonged cough, chills/fever, unexplained weight loss, chest pain, weakness, and night sweats
- May spread TB to others
- Usually have a positive IGRA or TST
- Often have an abnormal chest x-ray

To determine if a person has been exposed to TB, a **tuberculin skin test (TST)** or an **Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) blood test** is conducted, along with a questionnaire.

For the TST, a small amount of solution is injected under the skin on the forearm, and 48 to 72 hours later, a health care worker checks for a reaction on the arm. For the IGRA, a single blood draw is needed, and the results are generally available within a week.

### What does it mean to have a "positive" IGRA TB blood test or "positive" TB skin test?

A positive IGRA blood test or a positive reaction to a TB skin test means that a person has been exposed to the bacteria that cause TB. 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.



**This fact sheet is not a substitute for physician advice. Consult your healthcare provider for health concerns, contact your local office for general inquiries, or use the QR code for more information.**



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