

Are you at risk?

A TB skin test is used to test for TB infection. In some cases, an IGRA TB blood test may offer more information. You may be offered an IGRA TB blood test if you are **at risk of developing** TB disease if infected with TB. In some cases, both tests are used. Sometimes, the TB skin test is preferred (e.g., when repeat testing is needed).

IGRA TB blood tests may be **recommended** for people who:

- Have a positive TB Skin Test and were vaccinated with BCG.
- Have a negative TB Skin Test and have a weak immune system.
- Have a specific medical condition (e.g., new dialysis or transplant).

How is TB spread?

The TB germ is spread from one person to another person through the air when someone who is **sick with TB disease** in the lungs coughs, talks, sings, or sneezes. If you breathe in the air that has the TB germ, you may get infected with the TB germ and develop latent TB infection or active TB disease.



Latent TB infection occurs when you breathe TB germs into your lungs and your immune system **stops** the TB germs from multiplying and making you sick. The TB germs are in a sleeping (latent) state. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick, or have any symptoms. They **cannot** spread TB to other people. In fact, they do not even know the germs are in their body until they get a TB skin or blood test.



Active TB disease occurs when you breathe TB germs into your lungs and your immune system is **unable to stop** the TB germs from growing, multiplying and making you sick.

The signs and symptoms of **active TB disease** are: cough 2-3 weeks or longer, bloody spit, fever, night sweats, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, tiredness, chest pain and shortness of breath.

Why get a TB Blood Test?

The IGRA TB blood test can rule out a false positive TB skin test if you had BCG vaccine in the past. The IGRA TB blood test may help rule out a false negative TB skin test if your immune system is weak. An IGRA TB blood test will help tell you if the TB germs are in your body.



The TB germ may remain sleeping in your body your entire life or it can wake up, start multiplying, and make you sick with active TB disease. There is no way to know if or when this will happen. The chance of this happening increases when a person's immune system is weak, because the immune system is what keeps the TB germs in a sleeping state and prevents them from multiplying.

If you have latent TB infection, you can talk with your nurse or doctor about the best ways to prevent active TB disease.

Where do I get a TB blood test?

Labs need special training to do the test and must be able to process samples on site. Therefore only some hospital labs in BC are able to do the test. In some cases, you may need to travel to get the blood test done. Your nurse or doctor can tell you where the closest hospital lab is located.

Most TB blood tests are free in BC. TB blood tests for work and school require a fee.

Booking the test:

You may be asked to drop in or book an appointment. It depends on which lab you go to. If you need to have a live vaccine, the test should be done on the same day or 4 weeks after a live vaccine. Talk to your nurse or doctor if you had a recent vaccine.

Test Results and Next Steps:

It usually takes 1-2 weeks for the result. Ask your nurse or doctor how you will find out about your result.

A **negative TB blood test** usually means that you do not have TB germs in your body. If you had a positive skin test, this means that your skin test was a false positive.

A **positive TB blood test** means you likely have TB germs in your body. Your nurse or doctor may:

- ask if you have any signs or symptoms of active TB disease
- send you for a chest x-ray
- collect samples of sputum (phlegm or mucous from the lungs), if needed to rule out active TB disease.



For more information, please visit www.bccdc.ca/TBVideoEnglish and watch "TB Germ: A Cunning World Traveler". It is also available in Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Tagalog and Vietnamese.