

# SO YOU HAVE A POSITIVE TB SKIN TEST

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**1. What does this mean?**

A positive TB skin test means that sometime in the recent or distant past you may have been exposed to tuberculosis (TB) germs and have become **infected**.

**2. What is the next step?**

If you have a positive Tb skin test, your next step is to do a *Quantiferon Tb Gold Test*. A Quantiferon Tb Gold test is a highly specific blood test for the detection of tuberculosis infection and the disease. A positive Quantiferon Tb Gold test result is strongly predictive of a true infection.

**3. Does this mean that I have tuberculosis disease?**

Not usually. Most TB infections remain inactive and never are a problem for the person. Only a small number of people who have been infected will actually develop **TB disease**. It is only **TB disease** that causes a person to become ill. It is only **TB disease** that is contagious.

**4. How is the bacteria transmitted from one person to another?**

TB is spread when a person who has **TB disease** coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks and you breathe the contaminated air. Those bacteria are brought down deep into the lungs. From there they can go to other parts of your body.

**5. What is TB infection?**

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **TB infection**. Your immune system traps TB germs with special germ fighters. Your germ fighters keep from making you sick. You have a positive TB skin test. You **don't** feel sick. You **can't** give TB to others.

**6. What is TB disease?**

Most **TB disease** starts out as **TB infection** and then sometime later (maybe years later) for reasons which are unclear, the germ will begin to multiply and cause destructive disease in the lungs and other parts of the body. When a person has **TB disease**, they can spread it to others. A person who has **TB disease** needs medical help. **TB disease** is usually curable.

**7. How can the doctor tell if a person has TB infection or TB disease?**

The chest x-ray is used to determine if a person has **TB disease** or **TB infection**. If the radiologist does not see signs of **TB disease** on the chest x-ray, chances are greater that the person does not have **TB disease**. If a person has certain other symptoms or an abnormal chest x-ray, an analysis of sputum and other tests will be performed to determine if **TB disease** is present. A sputum specimen containing the TB bacteria is one sure way to determine if a person has **TB disease**.

**8. If a person has TB disease, what symptom(s) is he/she likely to have?**

The symptoms for **TB disease** vary from one person to another. The common ones may include chronic unexplained weight loss, cough, anorexia, night sweats, hemoptysis, fever, and shortness of breath.

**9. What will happen when I see my health care provider**

An initial assessment will be done (usually by the community health nurse). A Quantiferon Tb Gold test will be ordered. If it is positive, then a chest x-ray and blood work, (if needed) will be ordered. You will be scheduled to see the physician. If the physician decides to start preventive therapy, you will be given a prescription for a month's supply of INH and instructed to follow-up monthly with the community health nurse for refills.

**10. How long will I have to take INH preventive treatment?**

Generally, the preventive treatment involves taking one dose of INH daily for six (6) to nine (9) months. Children are treated for nine (9) months. HIV infected individuals are treated for twelve (12) months. Strict adherence to the daily schedule is important to obtain the best results. Take your pills the same time every day so that it will be easier to remember.