

EVALUATION OF A NEWLY POSITIVE TB SKIN TEST

| QUESTIONS | ANSWERS |
|--|---|
| ❖ <i>If I have a positive tuberculosis skin test, do I have tuberculosis?</i> | If your TB test is positive, it means that you have been exposed to TB bacteria and are carrying them in your body. You either have latent TB infection or active TB disease . Most people who have positive skin tests have latent TB infection. |
| ❖ <i>What is latent TB infection?</i> | Latent TB infection means that a small number of TB bacteria have entered your body, but the bacteria are not doing any harm. You feel fine, are not sick and you cannot give TB to anyone else . Sometimes latent TB infection can turn into active TB disease. |
| ❖ <i>What is active TB disease?</i> | Active TB disease means that a large number of TB bacteria are in your body and are causing illness. If not treated, the illness can become quite severe. Active TB can be found in any part of your body, but it usually affects your lungs. The most common symptoms of active TB are cough, fever, loss of appetite, weight loss, weakness, night sweats and fatigue. Unlike latent TB infection, active TB disease can be spread to others. |
| ❖ <i>What should I do if I have a positive TB test?</i> | If you have a positive TB test you should have a medical evaluation. A health care provider will ask whether you have any symptoms of active tuberculosis. Those symptoms include fever, night sweats, weight loss, fatigue, cough and chest pain. The health care provider will perform a physical examination and order a chest x-ray as well. If you have symptoms of tuberculosis or an abnormal chest x-ray, you may or may not have active TB disease. The health care provider will talk with you about the next steps in your evaluation. |
| ❖ <i>If I have a positive TB skin test but no symptoms, why do I need a chest x-ray?</i> | Sometimes people with active TB have no symptoms but have abnormalities on their chest x-rays. Without the x-ray, no one would know if you have active TB, and if you did have it, you could get much sicker and spread TB to others as well. |
| ❖ <i>What if my health insurance won't cover the cost of the chest x-ray?</i> | If you would like, the health care provider will arrange for you to have a free chest x-ray at a state-sponsored TB clinic. |