



Positive TB Skin Test Q & A

Q What if my TB skin test (TST) is positive?

A Most people with positive skin tests do not have tuberculosis. However, CSN requires that chest x-ray be obtained to be sure that there is no active pulmonary disease.

Q Where can I get a chest x-ray?

A If you have a positive TB skin test, you should contact your primary care physician or the local health district to arrange a chest x-ray.

Q Can Tuberculosis be treated?

A Yes, however it usually takes a combination of several drugs for successful treatment, and the drugs must be taken for a minimum of 6 months. Almost all people who take their medication as directed are cured. If tests continue to show positive results, treatment is extended for 8-9 months. Recently, some cases of tuberculosis have been caused by “resistance” bacteria that do not respond to the drugs that are typically used. Such cases are more difficult to treat. However, in almost all cases, tuberculosis can be treated successfully if found early enough and treated long enough.

Q What if I have a positive skin test and a normal chest x-ray?

A Sometimes treatment is given to prevent the development of tuberculosis. This treatment is known as “prophylaxis” and is done by giving a drug called isoniazid (also known as INH) every day for a minimum of 6 months. This prevents the infection from becoming active and reduces the risk of complications. Prophylaxis treatment may be recommended to you following a clear chest x-ray (CXR), but is voluntary and not mandated by CSN.

Q Who should consider taking prophylaxis?

A Prophylaxis should be considered in people with positive skin tests who:

- Have close contact with persons with tuberculosis
- Have recently developed a positive skin test
- Will be treated for long periods with cortisone-type medicines
- Have chronic illnesses such as HIV and diabetes
- Are under age 35

Prophylaxis is not routinely recommended for the elderly, people who are heavy drinkers of alcohol and people with liver disease.

Q Where can I learn more?

A American Lung Association
61 Broadway, 6th floor
New York, NY 10006
1-800-LUNG-USA (586-4872)
www.lungusa.org