



## Note

Once the tuberculosis test is positive it usually stays that way for many years, even after taking INH. If proof of tuberculin status is required, present the record below.

### Tuberculin Skin Test (PPD)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date placed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time to return to clinic for reading of results:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date read: \_\_\_\_\_

Results (mm): \_\_\_\_\_

If positive results, date/time of chest x-ray  
appointment:  
\_\_\_\_\_

County Health Department



# The Tuberculin Skin Test

tells:  
who is infected?  
what does it mean?

# Tuberculosis

The Florida Department of Health  
TB Program

## What Is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. Long ago, TB was also known as “consumption.” The TB germs are put into the air when a person coughs, sneezes, laughs, or sings. TB usually affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine. Some people who are infected with TB germs will go on to develop TB disease.

## Signs of Tuberculosis

The usual signs are chronic cough, fatigue, night sweats, unexplained weight loss or fever, loss of appetite or coughing up blood. Often the only sign is a persistent cough. These signs are often symptoms of other diseases as well, so be sure to see a doctor.

## The Skin Test

The purpose of a tuberculin skin test is to tell whether you have become infected with the germs (bacteria) that cause (TB) tuberculosis.

## How is It Done?

A small amount of harmless tuberculin protein is injected into the surface layers of the skin usually on the forearm.

## What It Shows

The test site is examined 48 to 72 hours after the test is given. If **NEGATIVE** or not significant, it usually means you are not infected with tuberculosis germs. However, certain medicines or medical conditions which affect the body’s immunity may cause a false



negative test result. Before having the skin test, discuss this with the person doing the test.

If **POSITIVE** or significant (test site shows swelling, possible redness and/or blistering), it means you have been infected with tuberculosis and you now have the germs in your body that cause tuberculosis disease. It may not mean that you have tuberculosis disease or that you can give it to other people. A chest x-ray, and perhaps other tests, should be done to see if you have tuberculosis. Occasionally a test will be read as “doubtful.” A repeat test will probably be necessary. The tester will explain why this is needed.

## Who Should Be Tested?

Persons at high risk of on-going exposure to tuberculosis should be re-tested at regular intervals. Persons who have been in contact with someone who has active tuberculosis should be tested as soon as possible. Anyone who might be or is infected with the HIV virus should be tested also.

## How Does It Spread?

Tuberculosis germs are inhaled into your lungs when you share breathing space with someone with active tuberculosis disease. This is usually at home, where you work, or where you spend most of your free time. You don’t get it from brief or casual contact in the open air. Often the source of infection is not known and you may have been unknowingly infected years ago.

## What Can I Do?

Once you are infected, you can develop TB disease any time in your life. If your chest x-ray is normal and you have no symptoms, drug treatment may be recommended to prevent tuberculosis disease now and in the future. The drug most used is called Isoniazid (INH) and must be taken every day for 6 to 9 months, depending on the doctor’s recommendations.

## Who Should Take INH?

It is especially important for infected persons who are at high risk for developing TB disease to consider treatment. Your doctor will explain your risk for disease. Infected persons who have had close contact over a period of time with someone who has active TB disease are considered high risk. Examples of infected persons at high risk for developing TB disease are persons with HIV infection, persons who show “old TB” on a chest x-ray, or persons who have certain medical conditions (like diabetes).



## Prevention is Important

Tuberculosis prevention is important for your health as well as for the health of those close to you.

If treatment is not recommended for you or if you do not complete treatment, you should be aware of the signs and symptoms of TB disease. If you develop any signs or symptoms of disease, seek medical help immediately.