

## **TUBERCULOSIS**

Tuberculosis or TB is a bacterial infection that is spread by respiratory contact with a person who has active TB disease. Symptoms of TB are fever, night sweats, prolonged cough, fatigue, weight loss, and appetite loss. Many people may have had a TB skin test or PPD (purified protein derivative of TB) placed sometime in their life for a job or school. This test will tell you if you are infected with the bacteria that cause TB. If your PPD is read as positive, this means that you have latent TB infection (LTBI). Persons with latent TB infection are not infectious. Only a thorough history and physical by your doctor and a chest x-ray will be able to tell if you have TB disease. Only persons with TB disease of the respiratory tract are infectious and can spread the disease to others. If you are told that you have a positive PPD and latent TB infection, you have a 10 % or 1 in 10 chance of developing TB disease sometime in your lifetime. There is no way of predicting if you will be that one in ten.

Certain other conditions, like HIV positivism and diabetes increase the risk of progression from TB infection to TB disease. The antibiotic used most often is Isoniazid or INH. The liver metabolizes this medication. Side effects are rare; but when they do occur, they are usually related to the liver. Drinking alcohol while on treatment is discouraged because this increases the chance of liver related side effects. This is your opportunity to ask questions too. Once your PPD skin test is positive, it will remain so. Your immune system has a "memory" (antibodies) of its encounter with the TB bacteria that will last your entire lifetime. Once you have taken a full course of the medication you should never be required to skin test again. If ever you are asked to be skin tested, simply tell the health care provider that you have a history of a positive skin test and completed 9 months of medication. Some health departments issue cards to carry in your wallet with this information.

TB is still very common in many countries especially Asia, India, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Russia. In some of these countries are given a vaccination called BCG (Bacille Calmette Guerin) to keep from developing the most serious forms of TB. TB is known to be more serious in children. The protective efficacy of BCG for preventing pulmonary TB in adults is highly variable, anywhere from 0% to 80%. For this reason, persons who may have had BCG vaccination in another country can still be skin tested. for TB and the reading of test and treatment recommendations are the same as for anyone else. If you are from a country where TB is prevalent and have a positive skin test, it is much more likely that the test represents latent TB infection and not any reaction to BCG.

The Health Center will be happy to perform and interpret your TB skin test.

Come visit us.



**Healthfully yours,**

**Dr. Healthberry**

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For questions or comments you can;

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