



TUBERCULOSIS ELIMINATION PROGRAM
STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
CORDELL HULL BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
425 5th AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37247

TUBERCULIN SKIN TESTING POLICY
APRIL, 2004

While tuberculosis (TB) remains a serious public health threat, the incidence of TB in the United States and Tennessee has decreased to an all-time low. In addition, the epidemiology of TB has dramatically changed in that TB disease now occurs predominantly among groups with certain risk factors. These risk factors include birth or residence in a country where TB is common, HIV infection, homelessness, residence or employment at a correctional facility, residence or employment in a long term care facility, and use of injection drugs.

In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed its approach to tuberculosis (TB) screening and testing. The previous TB "screen-all" strategies have been replaced by targeted tuberculin testing of high risk persons who would benefit from treatment to prevent this disease. Targeted tuberculin testing of high-risk populations is an effective TB control strategy that focuses TB screening and prevention efforts on groups in greatest need for these services. Under these new CDC guidelines, testing of low-risk occupational groups for administrative purposes (i.e. school teachers and bus drivers, childcare workers, adult day home workers, food handlers) is discouraged. Tuberculin testing of persons without a specified TB risk factor is low yield and may result in a falsely positive test result that could lead to the inappropriate treatment with potentially toxic TB medications.

Based on the above current CDC recommendations, the Tennessee Department of Health has instituted a policy that targeted tuberculin testing of high-risk persons be performed statewide, and that tuberculin testing of low-risk groups be discouraged. Under this policy, tuberculin testing should only be performed for the following persons at higher risk for exposure to or infection with TB:

- Close contacts of a person known or suspected to have TB
- Foreign-born persons from areas where TB is common*
- Health care workers who serve high-risk clients
- Mycobacterial laboratory workers
- Persons with HIV infection or AIDS
- Persons with medical conditions that place them at high-risk†
- Persons who inject illegal drugs
- Residents and staff or volunteer workers in high-risk congregate settings (alcohol and drug rehabilitation or methadone maintenance centers, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, mental health facilities, and long-term care facilities)
- Children under 18 years of age exposed to adults in high risk categories

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- Homeless persons
- Persons with radiographic or clinical findings suggesting TB disease
- Residence or prolonged travel in a country where TB is common
- Other high-risk populations as locally defined by the Department of Health[‡]

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the Tennessee Department of Health's Tuberculosis Elimination Program at 615-741-7247.

*Includes all countries except Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

†Includes diabetes, silicosis, end-stage renal disease, certain malignancies, immunosuppressive condition or treatment, intestinal bypass surgery or gastrectomy, chronic malabsorption syndromes, or body weight less than 10% ideal.

‡Designation as a locally defined high-risk population will be based on the incidence of TB disease and infection for that specific area or population; may include some medically underserved populations (i.e. US-born Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Native Americans, or migrant farm workers).