

## Tuberculin Skin Test

### What is Tuberculosis?

- Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by infection with the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB can damage the lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness.

### What is the Tuberculin Skin Test?

- The Tuberculin Skin Test (TST), also known as a Mantoux test, is used to assess whether you have been infected with TB.
- A small injection is given just under the skin, usually on the left forearm, and 48 – 72 hours later, the site is assessed for any reaction (lump) that may have formed.
- A lump may develop if you have been infected with TB or had a BCG vaccination. If a lump develops it will eventually disappear.
- A small percentage of the community will have a positive TST but **most people infected with TB, do not develop TB disease.**

### Before you have a TST:

It is important to let the nurse know if you:

- Have any form of cancer including lymphoma or Hodgkin's disease
- Take medication that affects the immune system e.g. cortico-steroids (prednisone), cyclosporin or chemotherapy drugs (to treat cancer)
- Have had a recent infection (in the past month) e.g. influenza, measles, or whooping cough
- Have been vaccinated (in the past month) against mumps, measles & rubella or varicella (chickenpox)
- Have HIV/AIDS
- These conditions can affect the interpretation and management of the TST.

### Care of the injection site

- Do not scratch the site
- Do not cover the site with any dressing, cream or ointment
- If any blisters occur do not break them
- You may continue all normal activities including work, sports and showering.

### What happens after the test?

- After the TST you **must return to the clinic 48 – 72 hours later** so that any reaction can be assessed and recorded.
- Some people who have a negative TST may need a second TST.

### Why are Tuberculin Skin Tests repeated?

- The first TST may be negative because the reaction to the TST can wane or disappear over time.
- The second TST (2-step TST) is done to stimulate the immune system to produce a reaction that may have waned.
- False positive and false negative reactions can make decisions about ongoing assessment and treatment difficult. The 2-step TST can help to clarify this position.

**If you have any concerns about the test after you leave here,  
please telephone the chest clinic.**