



Tuberculosis (TB)

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection. Anyone can catch it by breathing in the bacteria that cause TB in tiny droplets sneezed or coughed out by someone who has TB in their lungs.

In most people the body's immune system kills the bacteria before they start to cause symptoms and the person does not get ill.

Active TB: A few people become ill with TB within a few weeks or months.

Latent TB: In other people the bacteria are not killed but they become dormant, so the person does not get ill and is not infectious. However, if the bacteria start multiplying at a later date the person can develop active TB.

Screening for TB:

A tuberculin skin test (Mantoux test) on the upper arm is firstly carried out to determine past or present TB infection and is performed prior to BCG vaccinations on children over 1 year and adults. This test is called the Mantoux test, which is read in 48-72 hours.

If the skin has not become raised and reddened, then your result is negative. If this is the case, then a healthcare professional will talk with you to determine whether you are at risk of developing TB. If you are at risk and you have not already been vaccinated, then you may be offered BCG vaccination.

If your skin has become raised and reddened, this is a positive result and could mean that you have latent TB. But the reddening may have other causes, so if you have a positive mantoux test you will need checks to see if you have active TB. This will include a chest Xray and a referral to a chest physician which Northside Clinic can arrange.

BCG Vaccination:

If you or your children are offered BCG vaccination, you should discuss the benefits and possible problems with a healthcare professional before vaccination.

The expected reaction to successful BCG vaccination is induration at the site of injection followed by a local lesion which starts as a papule 2 or more weeks after vaccination: the lesion may then subside over several weeks or months, leaving a small flat scar.

Serious reactions with BCG are uncommon and most consist of prolonged ulceration.



Vaccine recommendations:

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are about 30 million new cases of TB worldwide every year. Approximately 7,000 of these new cases are in England, concentrated in large towns and cities.

Some people are at increased risk of getting TB and may be offered a vaccination called BCG. Usually people have a skin test called a mantoux test before having the vaccination.

The bacillus Calmette Guerin (BCG) vaccine provides immunisation against Tuberculosis (TB).

Risk Groups include:

- If you are in close contact with someone who has active TB
- Older children who were not vaccinated as babies and who may be at higher risk of TB
- NHS staff who work with patients or clinical material
- Staff who work in or regularly visit prisons and remand centres.
- Homeless people living on the street, including those in direct access hostels.
- People arriving to live in the UK from a country where TB is more widespread
- People planning to stay for 1 month living or working with local people in a country where TB is widespread.

If you think that you may be at risk or have been in contact with someone who has TB, speak to one of our primary care specialists at the Northside clinic about screening.