

Mantoux Skin Test– Information Sheet

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease which can have a slow onset of symptoms and cause poor outcomes for individuals if left untreated. Despite almost all forms of TB being curable, difficulties in detecting TB make screening for TB an important issue in the UK. This is particularly important in healthcare workers. In NHS Grampian, screening is performed using the Mantoux skin test.

What is the Mantoux skin test?

The Mantoux test is where a small amount of tuberculin protein is injected just into the skin on the forearm. Any reaction to this is then measured 2 days later. (The tuberculin protein currently in use is unlicensed and therefore your OHS Dr will write a special prescription for you).

Will I need a Mantoux skin test prior to consideration for a BCG vaccination?

Yes. Anyone aged 6 years or older requires a Mantoux skin test prior to consideration for a BCG vaccination.

How do you know if the Mantoux skin test is positive?

The Mantoux skin test site will be inspected by a trained nurse. Any redness/induration will be measured. If the reaction is greater than 5mm in diameter, this is positive result, no BCG vaccination would be required and follow up will be offered by the TB Service.

If I have a positive test, what does this mean?

Your immune system has mounted a response to the tuberculin protein and this indicates previous exposure to TB bacteria. If you are well, then it is likely you have latent TB infection.

What is latent TB Infection?

Latent TB infection is where someone has been exposed to TB bacteria, the bacteria have entered their body then become latent or dormant. Without treatment there is approximately a 10 – 15 % lifetime risk that the TB bacteria will reactivate and cause the individual to become ill with active TB disease and be potentially infectious to others.

What is the treatment for latent TB Infection?

The treatment is usually 12 weeks of once daily rifampicin and isoniazid antibiotics accompanied by a Vitamin B tablet called Pyridoxine.

What will the TB Service offer?

Following a positive Mantoux skin test, the TB service will offer you an appointment to attend for a Chest X-Ray and a discussion about the importance of Health Care Workers being treated for latent TB Infection. If you agree to treatment you will have routine baseline blood tests to check liver and kidney function as well as BBVs prior to starting. They will remain in contact with you for the duration of treatment. At the end of treatment, they will provide you with the necessary paperwork for your medical records to show you did complete treatment.

If you refuse treatment, this will also be documented in your medical and Occupational health record. OHS will issue a risk notice which emphasises the need to be vigilant for any signs of active TB.

If you are a healthcare student, refusal of treatment may affect your fitness for placements. The university will advise on this.

What happens if I have the Mantoux skin test and then miss the follow up appointment?

It is likely you will need to have the skin test repeated.