Myths and Misconceptions of TB Skin Testing

TB Skin Test Practicum
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Guam

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Myth

A positive skin test means I have TB.

Fact

A positive TB skin test only confirms that you have been exposed to tuberculosis and are infected, but not necessarily that you have disease.
Myth

“I used to have a positive TB test but now I’m negative”

Fact

Past positive TB TST is considered TB Infection. Later negative test maybe due to
- Incorrect placement
- Decrease immune response
- Inaccurate reading
**Myth**

BCG vaccination does not affect the TST.

**Fact**

Vaccination with BCG may cause a false positive reaction to a TB skin test which may complicate decisions about prescribing treatment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My TST test result was negative, so I do not have tuberculosis.</td>
<td>A negative TST test result may mean that the individual is not infected with tuberculosis. However, more than 20 percent of people who are infected do not have a reaction to the test.</td>
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Frequent Asked Questions (FAQs)
FAQs About Candidates

Is placing a TST on a nursing mother safe?

Yes

placing a TST on a nursing mother is safe.
Can pregnant women be tested?

YES

Yes, placing a TST on a pregnant woman is safe. No risk to mother or fetus. Pregnancy is often a good time to screen and test women who are at risk of TB.
Can Infants Be Tested?

YES

Infants may not react to a TST before 6 months of age, but should be tested if there is risk of exposure.
FAQ

Can a person with a previous positive TST be retested?

YES

• Retesting is not necessary if the previous result was documented

• Repeated skin tests do not sensitize or make persons “allergic” to tuberculin
FAQs About Administration

Does having more than one TST placed in 1 year pose any risk?

No risk exists for having TSTs placed multiple times per year.
If a person does not return for a TST reading within 48–72 hours, when can a TST be placed on them again?

A TST can be administered again as soon as possible.
FAQs

Should a TST Positive be accepted 7 days after the TST was placed?

Certain studies indicate that positive TST reactions might still be measurable 4–7 days after the TST was placed.

If the TST reaction is Positive 7 days after placement, the millimeter result can be recorded and considered to be a positive result.
FAQs

Can we use an insulin syringe to place the TST?  
No

**Insulin Syringes** can not be used in place of a **Tuberculin Syringe** because the units of measure are **different** and the needle of a **TB Syringe** is shorter than that of an **Insulin Syringe**.
FAQs

Should gloves be worn when placing TST?

Specific CDC recommendations do not exist regarding this topic. If your local area indicates that universal precautions should be practiced with skin testing, the local areas should determine what precautions should be followed in their setting.
FAQs About Interpretation
What Do We Do with a *Negative* TST Result?

- Provide Documentation of result
- No further evaluation necessary...
What Do We Do with a **Positive** TST Result?

- Evaluate Further
- Rule Out TB Disease
  - CXR
  - TB Symptom Screen/Assessment
  - MD Evaluation
  - Sputum Collection
- If disease is ruled out, consider for LTBI treatment
- If patient not willing or able to take treatment, educate on TB signs and symptoms
FAQs About Interpretation

Can HCW’s read their own TST?

NO

• HCW’s should NEVER be allowed to read their own TST

• Experience has shown that HCW’s do not measure their own TST results reliably
FAQs

Do Vaccinations interfere with TST results?

YES

May cause false (-) reactions.

A TST should be administered either on the same day as vaccination with live virus or 4–6 weeks later.

Vaccines that might cause a false-negative TST result are measles, varicella, yellow fever, smallpox, BCG, mumps, rubella, oral polio, oral typhoid, and live-attenuated influenza.
After TB has been transmitted, how long does it take for the body’s immune system to be able to react to tuberculin?

A. 48-72 hours  
B. 7-10 days  
C. 2-8 weeks  
D. 6 months or more
Thank you!!