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Tuberculosis

Chester County Health Department provides Tuberculosis (TB) services, by referral from healthcare providers, for evaluation and treatment of disease and infection. All TB services are by appointment only, no walk-ins.

Español

Please call (610)344-6225, option #2, then option #4, for more information.

The Tuberculosis program at Chester County Health Department no longer performs Tuberculin Skin Testing (TST), also known as a PPD or Mantoux test. These tests may be obtained through your Primary Care Provider and through a number of Urgent Care centers and retail clinics. If you received BCG (Bacille Calmette-Guérin) vaccine as a child or were born in or frequently travel to a country with high rates of Tuberculosis disease you should have a blood test called an IGRA (interferon-gamma release assay).

Tuberculosis Statistics

- Rate per 100,000 population

Year	United States	Pennsylvania	Chester
2022	2.5	1.3	1.49
2021	2.37	1.28	0.19
2020	2.2	1.23	0.19
2019	2.7	1.5	1.36
2018	2.8	1.65	1.34
2017	2.8	1.5	1.94
2016	2.9	1.4	0.4
2015	3.0	1.6	0.8
2014	2.9	1.6	1.2
2013	3.0	1.7	1.2
2012	3.2	1.8	1.4

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What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is a disease that is spread by tiny germs that can float in the air after someone with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, laughs, sings, or talks. Anyone nearby can breathe the TB germs into their lungs. You cannot get TB from someone's clothes, a drinking glass, handshake or toilet.

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called TB infection. Your immune system traps TB germs with special germ fighters. Your germ fighters keep TB germs from making you sick. If you have a weakened immune system, sometimes the germs will spread and can attack the lungs or other parts of the body such as the kidneys, brain or spine. TB is a very serious disease and requires medical treatment as it can be fatal if left untreated, however TB can be treated with a strict prescribed drug regimen.

What are the symptoms of TB?

General symptoms may include fatigue, weakness, weight loss, fever, chills, and/or night sweats. Symptoms of TB of the lungs may include a bad cough that lasts longer than three weeks, chest pain and/or coughing up blood. Other symptoms depend on the particular part of the body that is affected.

How do I know if I have TB infection?

There are two kinds of tests that are used to detect TB bacteria in the body: the TB skin test and TB blood tests. A skin test is performed by using a small needle to put some testing material, called tuberculin purified protein derivative (PPD), under the skin on your arm. In two or three days, a healthcare worker will check to see if there is a reaction to the test. The test is "positive" if a small bump appears on the arm. The bump means the person may have TB infection. Since this test can detect other bacteria a blood test specific for tuberculosis (mycobacterium tuberculosis) is the more specific test. The blood test should be ordered for anyone who has had BCG vaccine, was born, lived in or travels to countries with high rates of tuberculosis disease. A positive skin or blood test does not necessarily mean that the person has TB disease but they do need further evaluation and testing. It's at this point that a healthcare provider will order a chest x-ray to make sure the person's lungs are clear.

What happens if the test is negative?

If the test is "negative," it usually means the person is not infected. However, the test may be falsely negative in a person who has recently been infected. It usually takes two to ten weeks after exposure to TB for the skin test or blood test to react positive. The test may also be falsely negative if the person's immune system is not working properly. An additional test or evaluation may be necessary.

Where can I get tested?

Your healthcare provider may be able to test you in their office, or they may refer you to an Urgent Care or Retail Clinic for tuberculin skin testing. The Chester County Health Department no longer provides tuberculin skin testing. If your healthcare provider orders a blood test then you will go to the laboratory preferred by your insurance.

For more information regarding tuberculosis please see the attached <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm> or contact Chester County Health Department at (610) 344-6225, option #2, then option #4 for more information.

Links

What does it mean to have a positive test (skin or blood) for tuberculosis?
[CDC - Questions and Answers About TB](#)



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