



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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nyc.gov/health

A new, better test for tuberculosis (TB) infection

What is Quantiferon?

Quantiferon is a blood test to detect TB germs in your body. It is better than the older, skin test because it can tell the difference between the TB germ and the BCG vaccine. We cannot always tell the difference when we use the skin test.

How does the blood test work?

A small amount of blood is drawn from your arm with a needle. A lab tests the blood, and the results are ready in a few days. You may need to pick up the results at the clinic.

What do the Quantiferon test results mean?

- A **positive** test result usually means **you *have* TB germs in your body**. We will contact you to return to the clinic. You will need a chest X-ray and medical exam to tell whether you have latent TB (you have the germs, but they are walled off and sleeping) or active TB (you have symptoms and you are sick). A physician will talk with you about your risk of developing active TB and if treatment is right for you.
- A **negative** result usually means **you *do not have* TB germs in your body**. No further follow-up is necessary unless you have symptoms such as coughing for more than 3 weeks, fever, or unplanned weight loss.
- **Sometimes** the test does not work because the germs are too new in your body or your immune system is weak (for example, you have HIV). You may need a chest X-ray and a medical exam. **Rarely**, the blood test does not work and just needs to be done again. Your doctor will let you know what other tests or exams you need.

For more information

Ask the person giving you the test. Or go to nyc.gov/health, “Health Topics A to Z,” and click on Tuberculosis (TB).