



Tuberculosis (TB) Guidance for Camp Communities (2024)

Camp communities may have increased risk of exposure to tuberculosis, especially if hiring international staff or accepting international campers. Therefore, it is important to consider steps the camp might take to help minimize the risk.

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

TB bacteria spread through the air from one person to another. When a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings, TB bacteria can get into the air. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

TB is NOT spread by

- shaking someone's hand
- sharing food or drink
- touching bed linens or toilet seats
- sharing toothbrushes
- kissing

Testing

There are two kinds of tests used to detect TB bacteria in the body: the TB skin test (TST) and TB blood tests. A positive TB skin test or TB blood test only tells that a person has been infected with TB bacteria. It does not tell whether the person has [latent TB infection](#) (LTBI) or has progressed to [TB disease](#). Other tests, such as a chest x-ray and a sample of sputum, are needed to see whether the person has TB disease.

Who Should Be Tested

Certain people should be tested for TB infection because they are at higher risk for being infected with TB bacteria, including:

- People who have spent time with someone who has TB disease
- People from a country where TB disease is common (most countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Russia)
- People who live or work in high-risk settings (for example: correctional facilities, long-term care facilities or nursing homes, and homeless shelters)

- Health-care workers who care for patients at increased risk for TB disease
- Infants, children and adolescents exposed to adults who are at increased risk for latent tuberculosis infection or TB disease

TB Vaccine (BCG)

Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is a vaccine for tuberculosis (TB) disease. This vaccine is not widely used in the United States. However, it is often given to infants and small children in other countries where TB is common. BCG does not always protect people from getting TB.

Testing for TB in BCG-Vaccinated People

Many people born outside of the United States have been BCG-vaccinated.

People who were previously vaccinated with BCG may receive a [TB skin test](#) to test for TB infection. Vaccination with BCG may cause a positive reaction to a TB skin test. A positive reaction to a TB skin test may be due to BCG vaccination or infection with TB bacteria.

[TB blood tests](#) (IGRAs), unlike the TB skin test, are not affected by prior BCG vaccination and are not expected to give a false-positive result in people who have received BCG.

Implications for Camps

1. Learn where there is a higher incidence of TB globally. If you are recruiting staff or accepting campers from those areas, consider if a TB screening tool might be helpful.
2. Consider having international staff and campers show proof of a negative TB test.
3. Revisit your immunization policy to update guidance for campers and staff.

For additional information about Tuberculosis, consult the Center for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/faqs/default.htm>

Singer PM, Noppert GA, Jenkins CH. **Gaps in Federal and State Screening of Tuberculosis in the United States.** Am J Public Health. 2017 Nov;107(11):1750-1752. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.304076. PMID: 29019788; PMCID: PMC5637684.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5637684/#:~:text=However%2C%20screening%20for%20communicable%20diseases,no%20TB%20screening%20is%20conducted.>

What You Need to Know About Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by germs that are spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine.

Not everyone infected with TB germs becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection (or inactive TB) and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

The Difference Between Inactive TB and Active TB Disease

A Person With Inactive TB	A Person With Active TB Disease
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a small amount of TB germs in their body that are alive but inactive. • Has no symptoms and does not feel sick. • Cannot spread TB germs to others. • Usually has a positive TB blood test or TB skin test indicating TB infection. • Has a normal chest x-ray and a negative sputum smear. • Needs treatment for inactive TB to prevent active TB disease. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a large amount of active TB germs in their body. • Has symptoms and feels sick. • May spread TB germs to others. • Usually has a positive TB blood test or TB skin test indicating TB infection. • May have an abnormal chest x-ray, or positive sputum smear or culture. • Needs treatment for active TB disease.

If your body cannot stop TB germs from growing, you develop active TB disease. Symptoms of active TB disease include:

- A cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- Coughing up blood or sputum
- Weakness or fatigue
- Chest pain
- Fever
- Chills
- Night sweats
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss

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