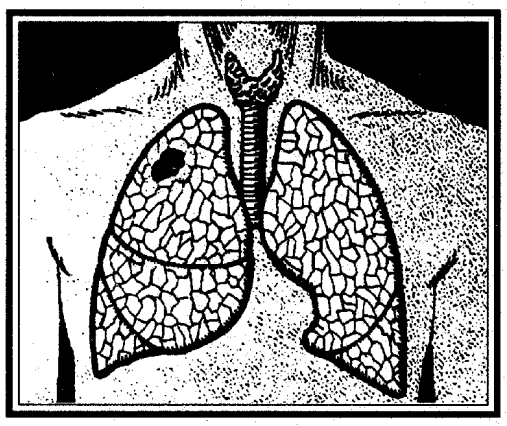
TUBERCULOSIS FACTS – The TB Skin Test

What is TB?

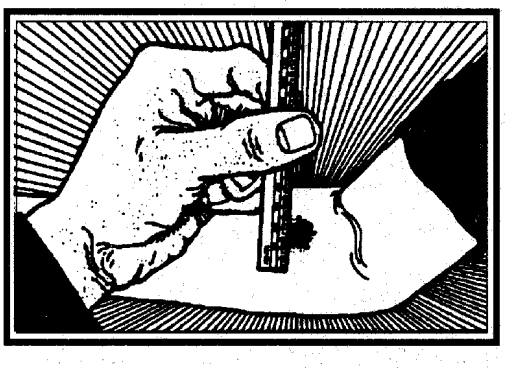
"TB" is short for a disease called tuberculosis. TB is spread by tiny germs that can float in the air. The TB germs may spray into the air if a person with **TB disease** of the lungs or throat coughs, shouts, or sneezes. Anyone nearby can breathe TB germs into their lungs.



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.

But sometimes, the TB germs can break away and spread. Then they cause **TB disease**. The germs can attack the lungs or other parts of the body. They can go to the kidneys, the brain, or the spine. If anyone has **TB disease**, they need medical help. If they don't get help, they can die.

How do I know if I have TB infection?



A skin test is the only way to tell if you have **TB infection**. This test is usually done on the arm. A small needle is used to put some testing material, called tuberculin, under the skin. In two or three days, a health worker will check to see if there is a reaction to the test.

The test is "positive" if a bump about the size of a pencil eraser or bigger appears on your arm. This bump means you probably have **TB infection**. You may need medicine to keep from getting sick.

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE EVER HAD A "POSITIVE" REACTION TO A TB SKIN TEST OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED WITH TB DRUGS IN THE PAST, TELL THE HEALTH WORKER.

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