

# Medicare National Coverage Determination for Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI) Testing

On January 31, 2024, more than 25 academic, medical, public health, and community-based organizations co-signed a formal request to the National Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for a national coverage determination (NCD) regarding TB infection testing. The request was accepted, but after more than a year its review has not started.

**Members of Congress, please contact CMS Administrator Dr. Oz and demand an immediate review of this national coverage determination request. Here's why:**

- TB is an airborne disease but preventable through testing and early treatment of persons with LTBI. Treating LTBI costs \$500-\$1300 per person, but if left to progress to full TB disease, costs rise to \$25,000-\$1,000,000 per case, with drug-resistant cases the most expensive.
- While the US has been a low incidence setting for decades, the number of TB cases has troublingly increased every year since 2020, with 2024 levels **the highest in over a decade**.
- **Nearly a quarter of new TB diagnoses in 2024** occurred among **persons over the age of 65**.
- Medicare recipients have risk factors - such as diabetes, kidney disease, cancer, immunosuppression treatments - that increase the risk of LTBI and TB disease. For example, more than 30% of Medicare recipients over 67 years of age have diabetes.
- The lack of an NCD creates a financial barrier to recommended TB preventive care for Medicare recipients. This is the **ONLY** preventive service for an infectious disease that has never had an NCD. This may have downstream consequences for coverage by other payors.
- An estimated **15 million Americans** in the Medicare population would be eligible for LTBI screening with the implementation of an NCD, per the US Preventive Service Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations.
- A 2022 study estimated that a one-time intervention of LTBI testing and treatment for the Medicare-eligible population who had at least one risk factor for TB would **prevent nearly 11,000 people from developing TB disease and over 2500 deaths**.

People with LTBI, also known as TB infection, are not sick but have TB bacteria in their body.

More than 80% of TB cases in the US are a result of untreated—and usually undetected due to an absence of testing—TB infection that progresses to full TB disease.

Over 50% of those who develop TB disease are hospitalized and 1 in 10 will die.

For more information on TB and the NCD request, contact: [leadership@stoptbusa.org](mailto:leadership@stoptbusa.org)

