

TB Skin Testing

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Uses intradermal purified protein derivative (PPD) to identify immune sensitization to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

When to use

- TB infection testing when a TST is appropriate and the patient can return for trained reading in 48-72 hours.

Supplies needed

- Tuberculin PPD; 1 mL tuberculin syringe; short 26-27 gauge needle; alcohol; ruler in millimeters; gloves; sharps container.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Verify test choice, prior TB results/treatment, BCG history, immune status, recent live vaccines, symptoms, and severe prior reaction.
- Explain two visits and that redness is not the measurement.

● VAULT TIP

- Place intradermally, read in millimeters, and measure only the firm induration across the forearm.

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; identify patient; verify PPD product, dose, expiration, and cold-chain handling.
2. Draw exactly 0.1 mL using aseptic technique and remove air.
3. Position forearm palm up on firm surface. Clean site and let antiseptic dry.
4. Stretch skin. Insert needle bevel up intradermally at 5-15 degrees so bevel is just beneath skin.
5. Inject 0.1 mL slowly. A pale wheal approximately 6-10 mm should form.
6. Withdraw without pressing or massaging. Do not cover with an occlusive bandage.
7. If no wheal or substantial leakage occurs, document failed placement and repeat at least 2 inches away per protocol.
8. Mark/record exact site. Teach patient not to scratch; normal bathing is allowed.
9. Arrange in-person reading by trained provider 48-72 hours after placement.
10. At reading, inspect and palpate for firm induration—not erythema. Mark the widest transverse edges across forearm.
11. Measure induration in millimeters with a rigid ruler. Record 0 mm if none; never chart only “positive/negative.”
12. Interpret using risk-based cutoffs and current guidance. Evaluate TB symptoms/positive results; a TST cannot distinguish latent from active TB.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Do not administer after prior severe TST reaction.
- Read at 48-72 hours.
- Measure induration, not redness.
- Positive test or TB symptoms requires evaluation, not automatic diagnosis of active TB.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Subcutaneous injection/no wheal.
- Massaging site.
- Measuring redness.
- Recording only positive/negative.

● DOCUMENTATION

- PPD product/lot/expiration/dose.
- Site, date/time, administrator.
- Wheal adequacy or repeat placement.
- Reading date/time and exact mm induration.
- Risk interpretation, teaching, referral.