

Tuberculin Skin Test for Healthcare Workers and Post-secondary Healthcare Students

Baseline tuberculin skin test (TST) guidelines for healthcare workers (HCW) and post-secondary healthcare students

The [Alberta public health disease management guidelines: tuberculosis](#) recommend baseline TB screening for health professionals and others who work or volunteer with populations at increased risk for TB. One component of screening HCW/students for TB is a tuberculin skin test (TST). The purpose of a baseline TST is to document whether an HCW/student has ever been exposed to or is currently infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

Access to baseline TST results enables accurate assessment and appropriate follow-up for the HCW/student if they are exposed to an infectious case of TB in the future.

Healthcare worker (HCW) definitions for the purposes of TB screening

- A worker whose anticipated role will involve prolonged contact with potentially infectious patients, for example, a HCW who in their position could spend more than 24 hours cumulative with a patient with undiagnosed TB
- A worker whose role could involve exposure to potentially infectious aerosols, for example, a HCW who performs bronchoscopies, autopsies, or sputum induction
- A worker whose role involves working with infectious TB samples in a laboratory

This includes all hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals (for example, students in healthcare disciplines and contract workers), physicians, volunteers and other healthcare personnel (for example, those working in clinical laboratories, long term care facilities, home care agencies and community settings), who are at risk of exposure to infectious TB because of their prolonged contact with individuals or contact with material from individuals with infectious TB, both diagnosed and undiagnosed.

Recommendations for baseline tuberculosis screening for HCW and post-secondary healthcare students

- Perform a single-step TST for most HCW and students at risk for potential occupational exposure to infectious TB.
- Perform a two-step TST for HCW and students when it is anticipated that the individual will undergo repeated screen with TSTs at regular intervals. This includes:
 - HCW/students involved in high-risk activities such as cough inducing procedures, autopsy, morbid anatomy and pathology examination, bronchoscopy, and designated mycobacteriology laboratory procedures especially handling cultures of *M. tuberculosis*.
 - HCW/students who work on high-risk units that admit patients with active TB.
 - HCW/students who work at facilities that require TST screening at regular intervals, such as homeless shelters, and inner-city agencies.