

# **TUBERCULOSIS BLOOD TEST (IGRA) QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**



**Central  
Health**

## **1. What is a TB blood test?**

Interferon Gamma Release Assay, or IGRA, is a blood test to find out if you have TB germs in your body. IGRA is done in addition to, or instead of, the tuberculin skin test (TST).

## **2. Why would a TST be positive?**

Prior to 1979, most children in Newfoundland and Labrador were vaccinated with Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) to help protect them from getting infected with tuberculosis. Those who have had BCG vaccine may have a false positive TST result. Unlike the TST, the BCG vaccine does not affect the IGRA test.

## **3. When is an IGRA blood test needed?**

An IGRA blood test may be needed if you have a positive TST result.

## **4. How do I get the IGRA blood test?**

The IGRA blood test is not performed in all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. Call your local lab regarding IGRA test availability, times, and any specific instructions. Once collected, the blood is sent to St. John's for testing and results should be available within 14 days. The doctor/nurse who ordered the test will get the results.

## **5. Do live vaccines affect IGRA?**

Yes. IGRA testing should be done either on the same day as vaccination with live-virus vaccine or 4 weeks after the administration of the live-virus vaccine.

## **6. What will happen if I have a positive IGRA result?**

If you have a positive IGRA result it could indicate that you have a TB infection referred to as latent TB. The difference between Latent TB Infection (LTBI) and TB disease is as follows:



<b><i>Person with Latent TB infection</i></b>	<b><i>Person with TB disease</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not feel sick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel sick and have symptoms such as cough for more than 3 weeks, fever and/or weight loss</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot spread TB bacteria to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May spread TB bacteria to others</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chest x-ray is usually normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chest x-ray may be abnormal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sputum smears are negative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sputum smears may be positive</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require treatment for LTBI to prevent TB disease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need treatment for TB disease</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not require isolation from others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require isolation during the infectious phase</li> </ul>