

## Factsheet:

# Interferon Gamma Release Assay test (IGRA test)

### Key points

- The interferon gamma release assay (IGRA) test is a blood test used to see whether a person has been infected with the tuberculosis (TB) bacteria.
- The IGRA test is used to diagnose TB infection. This is when the TB bacteria is in the body but the person is not experiencing any symptoms suggestive of TB disease.

### What is the Interferon Gamma Release Assay test (IGRA)?

The Interferon Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) is a blood test used to see whether a person has been infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (the bacteria causing TB). The IGRA test works by measuring the body's immune response to the TB bacteria.

An IGRA test may be used to diagnose latent TB infection. It is not used to test for TB disease. A negative IGRA means that you probably don't have the TB bacteria in your body. A positive IGRA test means that at some point in time you have probably been infected with the TB bacteria. This is called latent TB infection.

### What is latent TB infection?

Latent TB infection is when a person has the TB bacteria in their body but the immune system is stopping the infection from causing disease. Latent TB infection causes no symptoms and cannot be passed on to other people.

There is a small risk that latent TB infection can progress to TB disease. The risk is increased in young children and old people, as well as people with weak immune systems. TB disease develops if the TB bacteria start to multiply and cause symptoms, such as a fever, unexpected weight loss, tiredness or a cough that won't go away. Latent TB infection can be treated with special antibiotics to prevent it from progressing to TB disease in the future.

### Other tests for latent TB infection

The Tuberculin Skin Test (TST), also known as a Mantoux test, is another test for latent TB infection. It involves a small injection in the skin, usually on the forearm.

Your nurse or doctor will explain the advantages and disadvantages of the different tests and advise which is most suitable for your situation. In some situations both TST and IGRA testing may be required.

### Before you have an IGRA test

It is important to let the nurse or doctor know if you:

- Have any immune-suppressing illness such as HIV, lymphoma, or kidney disease
- Take medication that affects your immune system such as steroids (e.g. prednisone), cyclosporine or chemotherapy (cancer drugs)
- Have had a fever or infection in the past month, such as influenza, measles, or pneumonia

- Have received any vaccines in the past month
- Have had TB disease in the past, had contact with someone with TB, have received the BCG vaccine, or have travelled or lived overseas

These conditions may affect the test result.

### After you have an IGRA test

You will need to return to your doctor or chest clinic for the test result a few days later. Your nurse or doctor will explain the result and whether any more tests or treatment is required.

### Contact your local TB service for more information

For more information check the NSW Health website – [www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/tuberculosis/](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/tuberculosis/) or contact your local TB service.

### TB Service Contact Details

Sydney	Canterbury Hospital 9787 0946	Concord Hospital 9767 5675	Royal Prince Alfred 9515 8615
South West Sydney	Liverpool Hospital 8738 4888		
Northern Sydney	Hornsby Hospital 9477 9217	Manly Hospital 9976 9542	Royal North Shore Hospital 9463 1360
Central Coast	Gosford Hospital 4320 3388		
South East Sydney	Prince of Wales Hospital 9382 4643	St George Hospital 9113 2430	Sydney Hospital 9382 7535
Illawarra and Shoalhaven	Wollongong Hospital 4253 4138		
Western Sydney	Parramatta Health Service 9843 3110		
Nepean Blue Mountains	Nepean Hospital 4734 2536		
Hunter New England	John Hunter Hospital 4921 3372	Tamworth Community Centre 6767 7786	Armidale Community Health 6776 9958
Northern NSW & Mid North Coast	Lismore Population Health 6620 2280	Coffs Harbour Health Campus 6656 7855	
Southern & Murrumbidgee	Albury Community Health 6058 1820	Griffith Community Health 6966 9900	Queanbeyan Community Health 6298 9233
	Wagga Wagga Hospital 5943 1000	Goulburn Community Health 4827 3913	Bega Community Health 6492 9620
Far West & Western NSW	Broken Hill Population Health (08) 8080 1510		