

Latent TB Infection (LTBI) Talking Points for Civil Surgeons and Office Staff

These simplified talking points can be used by civil surgeons and their office staff (e.g., nurses, medical assistants) throughout the process of tuberculosis (TB) testing during immigration medical examinations for those seeking lawful permanent residency. **The goal is to encourage patients diagnosed with LTBI to start and complete treatment.**

At the time of Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) blood test



- A tuberculosis (or TB) test is required as part of your immigration medical evaluation.
- TB is a disease spread through the air. Most people do not know they are infected.
 - There are 2 stages of TB: 1) The latent or sleeping stage, where patients have no symptoms; and 2) The active stage where patients can be sick and spread the germ to others.
- People who have had prior TB vaccine (BCG) can still get TB. Prior BCG will not affect the blood test.
- If your blood test comes back positive for TB that means you are infected with the TB germ and we will talk to you about next steps.



If the patient has a positive IGRA



- Your TB blood test is positive. This means that you have TB in your body and are infected with the TB germ. We need to determine which stage of TB you have. There are 2 stages of TB:
 - 1) The latent or sleeping stage, where patients have no symptoms; and
 - 2) The active stage where patients can be sick and spread the germ to others.
- Either way, TB is preventable and curable.
- I am going to ask you about TB symptoms now. Do you have any of the following: cough for more than 2-3 weeks, coughing up blood, fever, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, or night sweats? *If symptoms are present then recommend chest X-ray and mask precautions. Note that any applicant with signs/symptoms of active TB should be referred to the health department, regardless of IGRA or chest X-ray results.*
- The next step is to get a chest X-ray. *[Provide chest X-ray instructions]*
- We will contact you with the chest X-ray results. Depending on the results, we may need more tests.



If the patient has a negative chest X-ray (LTBI diagnosis)*



- Your chest X-ray is normal. This means that you have latent TB infection (or LTBI) and the TB bacteria are sleeping in your body. You are not sick and cannot spread TB to others. We recommend that you take treatment for LTBI now to prevent it from becoming active TB. There are antibiotics for TB That can kill the bacteria and LTBI is easier to treat than active TB. Even though you don't feel sick, taking medicine now may protect you and your family from getting sick in the future.
- Having or treating LTBI **will not affect or delay your immigration application.**
- *Location of LTBI treatment and linkage to care differs by county. We recommend working with your local TB program to determine what is available and recommended. Here are some example statements:*
 - *I recommend that you take TB treatment and can provide this treatment to you (if civil surgeon is able to treat).*
 - *I am going to refer you to your primary care provider (PCP) to help with TB treatment.*
 - *I am going to refer you the health department to help with TB treatment.*
 - *Since you don't have a primary care provider, I will provide you a list of clinics where you can go to get TB treatment.*

***If chest X-ray is abnormal, immediately contact your local health department to refer/report suspected active TB. Information about contacting your local health department can be found here: <https://ctca.org/wp-content/uploads/CTCA-Directory.pdf>**