
What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis is an infection caused by a germ, which usually affects the lungs but can also cause disease in other parts of the body, such as the kidneys or glands. It is not a common disease but if it is not discovered and treated, then it can be serious.

What is BCG vaccine

BCG (Bacillus of Calmette and Guerin) named after the two doctors, who developed the vaccine, to help prevent TB

Will BCG vaccination prevent me catching TB?

BCG vaccination can reduce but not entirely remove the chances of catching TB infection

Who gets BCG vaccination?

BCG is no longer recommended or offered to all young people in High School. Instead those who are at higher risk of coming into contact with TB are targeted.

Newborn babies from ethnic minority backgrounds are considered at higher risk and should be vaccinated within the first month of life. Others who are considered for vaccination are:

- ❖ contacts of TB cases
- ❖ immigrants from high-risk countries
- ❖ health care workers.

Vaccination may also be recommended for extended travel reasons.

Is it safe?

BCG vaccine has been used in Britain since 1953. It has been given to millions of people and has an excellent safety record.

What is a tuberculin (Mantoux) test?

It is a test, which is carried out in most cases before BCG vaccination. It requires a small amount of tuberculin solution (a protein taken from the TB germ) to be injected under the forearm skin. The reaction is read two to three days later.

If there is little or no reaction the BCG vaccination can usually be given if it has not been given before. In some circumstances it may be necessary to repeat the skin test several weeks after the first one. Should a more marked area of redness develop the BCG vaccination may not be necessary. Should this happen more tests may be needed such as a chest X-ray or blood test.

How is BCG vaccination given?

A small amount of vaccine is injected under the surface of the skin, usually at the middle of the left upper arm.

What happens after my vaccination?

After 2-3 weeks, a red spot will appear at the vaccination site. This will fade over the next few weeks, leaving a small scar. This is a normal reaction and no treatment is required. You should not use any creams, poultices or cover the vaccination site.

It should not be painful unless knocked and it is not necessary to protect the site when bathing or showering. In some people the spot may turn into a small oozing lump. Again no creams or poultices should be used.

A dry dressing may be applied if there is a lot of discharge. The spot will heal naturally over several weeks if left.

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Can I go swimming?

The vaccination site can be covered with a temporary waterproof dressing while swimming but should be removed immediately afterwards.

What if I have any problems?

Reactions to BCG vaccination are rare, but if the vaccination site does not heal or gets bigger you should seek advice. Contact the clinic where you had the vaccine.

Need further advice or information?

- ❖ NHS Inform www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ NHS24 ☎ 111 www.nhs24.co.uk
- ❖ www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk
- ❖ Local health clinic or GP

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NHS Borders on 01896 825522 or email equality@borders.scot.nhs.uk

Produced by: Public Health Dept, NHS Borders, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BD, 01896 825560

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