

# *Facts About Tuberculosis in Pregnancy*

## *What happens if the chest x-ray is not normal?*

You will be referred right away to a doctor who specializes in the treatment of TB. This doctor may do other tests to find out if you have active TB disease now.

## *What if I have active TB while I'm pregnant? I don't want to take any medicines until after the baby is born.*

The medicines the doctor would prescribe are safe for you and the baby.

## *If the doctor says I don't have TB do I still need to take medicines?*

If your PPD test is positive and your chest x-ray is negative, the doctor may recommend taking a medicine so you don't get TB disease.

If you have questions, call Infection Control at Mount Auburn Hospital at 617-499-5026.

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***Why do I need a TB test?***

If you were born in or spent a lot of time in certain countries, you may be at a higher risk of developing TB.

Your doctor or midwife will do a TB test if you have never had a ‘positive’ test. The test is called a PPD and is done by injecting a tiny amount of liquid just under the skin of the forearm. Your doctor or midwife will need to “read” the test 2-3 days after placing it.

***Why do I need the test now, when I’m pregnant? No other doctor has said I should be tested.***

Pregnancy does not make you more likely to have TB infection, but if you are infected, it may endanger your baby at the time of birth. Also, TB can cause health problems for you during the pregnancy.

***Can the PPD test harm the baby?***

No. Even babies can have a PPD test. It is very safe.

***I had a BCG vaccination as a child so that I wouldn’t get TB. I have always been told I don’t need a test.***

The BCG vaccination does not always protect you from TB. Vaccination does not cause the test to be positive; it will only be “positive” if you have been infected with TB.

***What happens if my TB test is positive?***

Your doctor or midwife will order a chest x-ray. If you have no symptoms of TB the x-ray can be done after you are 20 weeks pregnant. If you do have symptoms, your doctor or midwife will get the x-ray right away.

***So if the PPD is positive I need a chest x-ray. Will the x-ray harm the baby?***

No. The amount of radiation in modern x-ray equipment is so tiny it can barely be measured. The equipment at Mount Auburn Hospital is the safest in the world and the x-ray technologist will place a lead shield over the baby for extra protection.

***If the PPD test is positive, does that mean I have TB?***

Not usually. A positive PPD test means you have been exposed to the TB bacteria. It does not mean you have the active disease. Active TB disease means you have symptoms, usually including a cough, tiredness and sometimes a fever. Only people with active TB disease can spread it to others.

***I have had a chest x-ray in the past that the doctor told me was normal. Why do I need another one now?***

We recommend another x-ray if the last one was more than one year ago. If it was more than three years ago, you need another one now to make sure you don’t have active TB and don’t have symptoms yet. Delaying until after the baby is born would endanger the baby if you have active TB disease.

***So if I get a chest x-ray and it is normal what happens?***

You will be referred to a doctor or clinic after the baby is born. At that time you and the doctor will decide together if taking a medicine to prevent active TB disease is right for you.