



# TUBERCULOSIS (TB) AND THE BCG VACCINE: INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD THE BCG VACCINE

## TB Skin Tests and the BCG Vaccine:

Persons who have had the BCG vaccine can have a TB skin test

***The BCG vaccine  
does NOT keep  
someone from  
catching TB***

## Important Information About TB

- Tuberculosis is an infectious disease common in many countries.
- TB is spread through the air by someone with TB disease of the lungs.
- TB starts as TB infection. People with TB infection (a positive skin test) are not sick and cannot spread TB to others.
- Some people with TB infection develop TB disease. They get very sick with a cough that does not go away. They often have fever, sweats, and even lose weight. People with TB disease of the lungs may infect others. They must be treated to stop them from spreading TB and to cure them of TB.
- The BCG vaccine does NOT keep someone from catching TB infection, and its protection is not always long lasting after vaccination. This is why the vaccine is not generally used in the United States.

## Answers to Questions You May Have About the BCG Vaccine

### ***What is BCG?***

BCG stands for Bacillus Calmette-Guerin which is a vaccine made of a live, weakened type of bacteria similar to TB. It is used in many countries around the world.

### ***Why was I given the BCG vaccine?***

The vaccine is usually given to very young children in countries with high rates of TB because it prevents the more serious forms of TB disease from developing.

### ***How does the BCG vaccine work?***

The BCG vaccine does NOT prevent someone from getting TB infection. The BCG vaccine has been shown to reduce the chances of developing TB especially in young children who have been given the vaccine. But many people develop TB even if they have been vaccinated.

### ***Could my BCG vaccine cause me to have a positive TB skin test?***

It can. But, a vaccine given several years ago usually no longer makes your test positive for TB. Let your medical care provider know when you had your BCG vaccine and if you had more than one.