

Information Sheet | Canberra Health Services

Tuberculosis Interferon Gamma Release Assay (TB QuantiFERON-Gold Test)

Background

The tuberculosis interferon gamma release assay, otherwise known as TB-QuantiFERON-Gold, is a blood test which is used to determine whether a person may have been infected at any time in the past with the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* – the cause of the disease known as tuberculosis.

Around 90% of people who are infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* never develop any evidence of active disease, despite the bacterium being persistent in their body. The other 10% of infected people will develop disease at some stage over their lifetime. People with an impaired immune system, for example those on chemotherapy or medications following organ transplantation or to control autoimmune diseases, are at greater risk of developing active disease.

The aim of the TB-QuantiFERON-Gold test is to identify people who have been infected at any time with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* so that they can be treated to prevent future active disease. This test is not recommended for the diagnosis of active disease.

Outpatient Testing at ACT Pathology

The collection technique and the first phase of testing is critical for ensuring the accuracy of the results. For this reason, specimen collection is available at the following ACT Pathology collection centres during the specified hours and on the specified days:

- **Canberra Hospital collection centre** - Building 10 (next to maternity) - Monday to Thursday 7:30am to 4:00pm
- **Canberra Region Cancer Centre collection centre** – Canberra Hospital Building 19 - Monday to Thursday 7:30am to 3:00pm
- **North Canberra Hospital collection centre** - Monday to Thursday 7:30am to 2:00pm

Test Costs

The TB-QuantiFERON-Gold test is only able to be bulk-billed via Medicare when the request form includes clinical notes that indicate that the person has either been exposed to an active case of tuberculosis, is immunosuppressed, is about to become immunosuppressed and/or has silicosis. Some other high-risk people may have the cost covered by specific ACT Health tuberculosis screening programs. The cost of the test for all other people is \$50.

Time to Results

The first phase of testing requires 24 hours, following which the specimen is stored pending second phase testing. Second stage testing is performed three times a week, therefore results can be expected within five days of specimen collection.

Further Advice

Clinicians who require further information or advice regarding the TB-QuantiFERON-Gold test and/or diagnostic options for tuberculosis should contact the Clinical Microbiologist via Canberra Hospital switchboard on 5124 0000.



Acknowledgement of Country

Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.

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