



**Occupational
Health Department**
Beaumont Hospital
occupationalhealth@beaumont.ie

Positive Quantiferon Blood Test Information for Healthcare Workers

What is a Quantiferon blood test?

A Quantiferon blood test is a test which detects the presence of Tuberculosis (TB).

What is Tuberculosis?

TB is a curable bacterial infection caused by the germ *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It usually affects the lungs, but can affect other parts of the body such as the lymph nodes and kidneys. TB is only potentially infectious to others if it is in the throat or lungs.

What does it mean if the Quantiferon blood test is positive?

If your Quantiferon blood test comes back positive, you will be referred for a chest X-ray and will be scheduled for an appointment with the Occupational Health Physician. A positive Quantiferon may indicate one of the following:

1. Old Recovered TB Infection:

You were previously infected with TB and following treatment you have cleared the germ. *You are not considered infectious, and do not require treatment or follow up.* Your Quantiferon test will always remain positive.

OR

2. Latent TB Infection(LTBI):

You have been exposed to the germ and it is inactive in your body. There is a risk of reactivation (5-15%), which would then cause active TB. This risk increases if you become immunosuppressed e.g. chemotherapy, immunotherapy, high dose steroids etc.

You are not infectious if you have no symptoms of active TB and you can work as normal.

There is a treatment option to remove the potential of TB reactivation, this treatment is **NOT** mandatory but is highly recommended.

If you opt for treatment, you will be referred to the Infectious Disease (ID) team to discuss treatment options. Treatment consists of 3-6 months of medication, with follow up bloods. After completion of treatment you are considered to have cleared the germ.

If you decline treatment, you remain at risk of TB reactivation. You will be placed on an annual surveillance programme by OH for the duration of your career in Beaumont Hospital. If at any point you develop symptoms of active TB (see below) you must update OH and seek urgent medical treatment.

OR

3. Active TB Infection:

This is when the germ is in your lungs or throat. A person with active TB is usually symptomatic. If you are diagnosed with active TB you will be referred to the ID team for appropriate follow up.

With active TB you **ARE** infectious and cannot work. ID & OH will discuss fitness for work with you.

What are the symptoms of Tuberculosis?

- Persistent cough lasting greater than 3 weeks.
- Unexplained fevers and sweating profusely at night (i.e. having to change the sheets)
- Unexplained shortness of breath and/or chest pain.
- Unexplained weight loss and/ or loss of appetite.
- Ongoing fatigue.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Can I continue to work?**
Yes, if you have no symptoms of active TB infection.
- **I had the BCG vaccine, is that why my Quantiferon is positive?**
No, the Quantiferon test is highly specific and can only detect if you have *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis* from an exposure.
- **Do I need to inform my manager of my positive Quantiferon?**
Your medical information is confidential to the Occupational Health Department. However if you have active TB you are unfit for work, therefore you will need to liaise with your manager
If contact tracing is required we may need to liaise with your colleagues. This would be discussed with you during your OH consultation.

Available supports:

If you have any further questions you can contact OH on occupationalhealth@beaumont.ie

For further information on tuberculosis please see the HSE website: [Tuberculosis - HSE.ie](https://www.hse.ie/eng/tb)