What is tuberculosis (TB) and TB testing and why is it important for admission to CU Boulder?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection and TB disease.

CU Boulder requires that all incoming students complete a Tuberculosis Questionnaire. This questionnaire can identify a person who may be at a higher risk for being exposed to TB. Some examples include being born or living in a country where TB is more common or working/volunteering in a healthcare setting or homeless shelter. When a student is identified as being at risk, further tuberculosis testing is required for school admission. The incoming student will be required to submit a “Documentation of Tuberculosis Testing” form. This form is available in the student portal under Downloadable Forms.

What kind of tuberculosis testing is required?

There are two types of TB tests.

**Tuberculin skin test:**
The TB skin test (also called the Mantoux tuberculin skin test) is a two-step test. A person given the TB skin test must return to have a health care worker look for a raised, hard area or swelling and measure its size using a ruler. This test is preferred for students that have not received a BCG TB vaccine as a child.

**Positive skin test:**
This means the person’s body was infected with TB bacteria. Additional testing can determine if the person has latent TB infection or TB disease. A chest x-ray is required.

**Negative skin test:**
This means the person’s body did not react to the test, and that latent TB infection or TB disease is not likely.

**TB blood tests:**
Known as interferon-gamma release assays (IGRAs) measure how the immune system reacts to the bacteria that cause TB. TB Blood Tests are the preferred method of TB testing for people who have received BCG Vaccine. This vaccine is for TB disease. TB blood tests are not affected by prior BCG vaccination and are not expected to give a false-positive result in people who have
received BCG. A CU Boulder accepts a copy of Quantiferon or T-Spot TB lab result or written lab value.

**Positive test:**
This means that the person has been infected with TB bacteria. Additional tests are needed to determine if the person has latent TB infection or TB disease. A chest x-ray is required.

**Negative test:**
This means that the person’s blood did not react to the test and that latent TB infection or TB disease is not likely.

**My TB Skin Test or TB Blood Test are positive, now what?**
Once a person has a positive TB Skin Test or a positive TB Blood Test they are required to have a follow-up chest x-ray to rule out active TB disease. A person with active TB disease in the lungs can spread TB to others and is a public health concern. If the chest x-ray is normal than a person is not contagious but still has latent TB infection.

*A chest x-ray cannot be submitted alone as proof of no TB disease. It must be accompanied with a TB Skin Test (PPD) or a TB Blood Test (IGRA).*

**Can I attend CU Boulder if my TB test is positive?**
Yes, if your chest x-ray is normal (no sign of active TB disease) then you can attend CU Boulder. If you are identified as having infectious TB, disease you will have to complete treatment until you are no longer contagious to others before you can attend.

**What if I am unsure about what test I need for attending CU Boulder?**
Call the Infection Control RN at 303-492-4249 or Patient Services at 303-492-2005; they can assist you in determining what tests and documentation you need.

It is important that you have all the testing and documentation completed and submitted before you attend CU Boulder for classes. Please make every effort to have this done before you get here. This will make your transition to CU Boulder less stressful. Medical Services at CU Boulder can assist you if it is not possible to get all testing done before you attend school.

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