

# Tuberculosis (TB)



## BCG (Bacille Calmette-Guerin) Vaccination

### What is BCG?

BCG is a live vaccination against tuberculosis (TB). It is the only vaccination available against TB today, but it does not provide permanent or absolute protection against TB.

BCG is used in areas of the world where TB is common and the chance of being exposed to contagious TB is high. BCG helps reduce the severity of TB disease in infants and children.

### Who is given BCG?

In countries with high rates of TB, BCG is given to infants and children to help prevent the more serious forms of TB disease, like TB meningitis or miliary TB, which can often lead to death. In some countries, BCG is given several times during childhood and early adult life, in an effort to maintain some protection against TB.

In Canada, BCG is given to First Nation and Inuit infants in communities with high rates of TB.

For infants born in Canada who will be moving to and staying for extended periods of time in a country with high TB rates and where BCG vaccination is still standard practice, vaccination is recommended soon after arrival in the high TB rate country. Visit [bcqatlas.org](http://bcqatlas.org) for more information.

In Canada, BCG vaccination is not recommended for adults travelling to countries with high TB rates.

### Does BCG work?

BCG is effective in the prevention of serious forms of TB. The protection BCG offers in infants and children does not extend to adult life. Thus many people develop active TB even though they received BCG, even in multiple doses, in earlier years.

However, in areas of the world with high rates of TB, the risk of children developing severe TB is high enough to make the use of BCG worthwhile.

### Can BCG cause a positive TB skin test?

BCG can cause a positive skin test. However, as time goes by, not everyone who had BCG will continue to have a positive skin test. You must always talk to your doctor about any potential exposure or risk to TB, even if you had a BCG in your childhood.

If you have a positive skin test and are from a part of the world where TB is common, it is more likely due to TB exposure and not the BCG vaccine.

You can have a TB skin test even if you have had BCG vaccination.

### For more information:

- Speak to your doctor
- Call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
- Visit [peel-stoptb.ca](http://peel-stoptb.ca)