

Tuberculin Skin Testing (TST): Storage of Tuberculin and Need for Orders to Administer

Background

MDH has recently become aware that some health care settings are improperly storing tuberculin (sometimes called “PPD”) and/or doing TB skin tests (TSTs) without a legal prescription such as a patient-specific or condition-specific order. This fact sheet outlines the requirements for these issues.

Tuberculin storage

The results of TSTs done with improperly stored tuberculin are not reliable.

Store tuberculin at 35° to 46°F (2° to 8°C) and protect it from light (keep in original packaging). Monitor refrigerator temperature using a digital thermometer with the probe inserted in a vial of biosafe glycol or a vial of glass beads. Tuberculin that has been exposed to freezing temperatures (32° F or lower) or has been stored above 46°F should be discarded.

Use a stand-alone or medical-grade refrigerator appropriate for storing tuberculin, vaccines, and medications. Do not use a dorm-style refrigerator (combination refrigerator and freezer with a single door). Do not place tuberculin in the door of the refrigerator. Date the tuberculin vial when opening and discard it after 30 days. Do not store tuberculin vial with other vials, such as Tdap, that could be mistaken for tuberculin.

Fill syringe with tuberculin immediately prior to administering TST; do not pre-fill.

Information about appropriate storage can be found at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/hcp/vaxhandling.html.

Signed TST protocols

A nurse must have a legal prescription to administer a TST. This can be done with a patient-specific order or a condition-specific protocol signed by a licensed prescriber. Nurses administering TSTs without signed protocols or prescriber’s orders are working outside their legal scope of practice. This is regulated by the Minnesota Board of Nursing. Contact the Minnesota Board of Nursing, at 612-317-3000, with questions.

A template that can be adapted for your use is available from the MDH TB Program at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/tst.html.

Additional resources

- TB screening requirements for health care workers: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/rules/index.html
- TB screening requirements for patients in boarding care homes and nursing homes: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/rules/index.html
- TST technique and documentation requirements: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/tst.html