

Tuberculosis Screening

Updated Requirements for the School-Aged Population

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial disease spread from person to person through the air.

Common myths about TB:

Myth: Being infected with TB (positive skin test or blood test) means you have active TB disease.

Fact: Infection does not necessarily mean disease:

TB Infection	TB Disease
Does not feel sick	Usually feels sick
Has no symptoms	Has symptoms
Cannot spread TB bacteria to others	May spread TB bacteria to others
Usually has a positive skin test or blood test	Usually has a positive skin test or blood test
Has a normal chest x-ray and a negative sputum smear	May have an abnormal chest x-ray, and/or positive sputum smear, and/or positive culture
Needs treatment for TB Infection to prevent developing active TB disease	Needs treatment for active TB disease

Myth: TB testing is the same as TB screening.

Fact: Testing for TB is not the same as screening for TB. With TB screening, a risk assessment (series of questions) is performed by a clinician. If the person is deemed higher risk, then a test for TB infection is done. In contrast, TB testing consists of a skin test (TST) or blood test (QFT or T-Spot). If these tests are positive, then a chest x-ray is done.

What is the current TB School Mandate?

The LAC Department of Public Health (DPH) currently requires all children entering kindergarten or attending a California school for the first time to have a test for TB infection and to submit the results before starting school. If the skin test is positive, the students must get a chest x-ray.

Common myths about the TB School Mandate:

Myth: The School Mandate is used to find and treat children with active TB disease.

Fact: The mandate was designed to determine and track TB infection rates, NOT to find and treat active TB disease cases. TB Control uses contact investigations to find active TB cases of all ages.

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Myth: Without the TB School Mandate, there will be no monitoring of TB cases in place.

Fact: The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Tuberculosis Control Program (TBCP) will continue to track cases of TB in children to make sure disease rates do not rise.

Myth: The School Mandate Program makes sure children with active TB disease are treated.

Fact: Tracking is not in place to guarantee that children who test positive for TB infection complete treatment. Evidence shows that many who do begin treatment do not complete treatment.

Myth: If the mandate is not in place, there will be an increase in pediatric cases of TB in LA County.

Fact: Other California counties without a TB school mandate, like San Diego and Riverside, have continued to see fewer cases of TB in children.

What is the planned new approach?

- End the current TB School Mandate for children entering kindergarten or a California school for the first time.
- Your child will have all of his or her exams in one visit to the doctor.
- Doctors will screen students and only test them for TB if a risk factor is present.
- Your child will be referred to medical offices where he or she can receive a full range of care.

Why change it?

- Instead of seeing a doctor many times to get your child a physical exam and TB test, TB screening will now be a part of the physical exam for first graders.
- To prevent children who are not infected with TB from receiving medication that may harm the liver
- Experts say this process is the best method.
- To focus on better ways to find active TB disease cases and reduce active TB disease rates
- To make sure children have a family doctor for all of their medical needs

Which children have a higher risk of being infected with TB?

- Children born outside of the United States and in regions of the world with high rates of TB (generally all countries other than the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of Western Europe).
- Children who have had contact with people with confirmed or suspected TB disease.
- Children who have traveled to a country with high TB rates for a long period of time.
- Children who spend time with people who have been in jail (or prison) or a shelter, use illegal drugs, or have HIV.
- Children who drink raw milk or unpasteurized cheese.

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Will this change to the school mandate put my child at a greater risk?

No. Your child's risk will not change, but the burden will be reduced. You will be able to have your child screened during the same medical visit as the physical exam. Also, your child will not have to miss school in order to get tested and/or get a chest x-ray.

Where can I get a physical exam for my first-grader?

- The physical exam is done by the family's usual source of medical care, including: private doctors, community clinics, health department clinics, prepaid health plans, military facilities, some school districts and other sources.
- The documents in this toolkit list options for free or low-cost health insurance and have a list of CHDP providers.

Does this affect nursery schools, school volunteers, or school personnel?

No. This change only affects students.

What if all of my questions weren't answered by this sheet?

- For more information, please visit the Tuberculosis Control Program website:
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb/>