

Examination for tuberculosis in case of admission to a shared accommodation

Why am I being tested for tuberculosis?

In shared accommodation, many people often meet in a confined space, so that tuberculosis (and other infectious diseases) can be transmitted more easily. In order to reduce the risk of spreading tuberculosis, a test for infectious pulmonary tuberculosis is required by law in Germany before or upon admission to a shared accommodation facility (e.g. initial reception facility for asylum seekers or refugees) (Infektionsschutzgesetz §36 Abs.4). Therefore, an X-ray of the lungs is usually taken for persons over the age of 15.

Tuberculosis usually causes symptoms. However, especially at the beginning of the disease, some people have no symptoms and may already be contagious. Children, pregnant women, old or weakened people are particularly at risk of severe tuberculosis.

The painless X-ray examination, which can be performed in just a few minutes, helps to detect pulmonary tuberculosis and treat it at an early stage. The examination therefore serves both your own well-being and that of your family and all others who live and work in the shared accommodation.

Why is an x-ray necessary?

The best method to detect or rule out pulmonary tuberculosis is an x-ray of the lungs. The radiation exposure during this X-ray examination is very low (see table).

Are children and pregnant women also x-rayed?

When the human body is growing, it is more sensitive to X-rays. Therefore, for children and adolescents up to 15 years of age and for pregnant women, a blood test (IGRA) or a tuberculin skin test (THT) are recommended first. If the test results indicate an infection with tuberculosis bacteria, an X-ray examination is also performed to rule out or confirm pulmonary tuberculosis.

What happens if I am diagnosed with tuberculosis?

If the X-ray shows signs of pulmonary tuberculosis, further tests like the examination of the sputum – an also painless examination of coughed-up secretion - are necessary to confirm the diagnosis. Tuberculosis can be cured with specific drugs in most cases. The earlier the disease is detected, the better are the chances of cure and the lower is the risk of transmission into the environment. If pulmonary tuberculosis remains undetected, the disease can spread inside the body and cause permanent damage.

Good to know - Comparison of radiation exposure

	Radiation dose (in Millisievert)
X-ray examination of the chest	0,01-0,03
Flight from Munich to Japan	0,1
Average yearly radiation exposure from natural sources in Germany	2-3
Source: Deutsche Krebsgesellschaft online https://www.krebsgesellschaft.de/onko-internetportal/basis-informationen-krebs/bewusst-leben/krebsrisiko-strahlung.html	