

# *Are periodic chest x-rays\* recommended in tuberculosis screening programs for employees?*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),<sup>1</sup> the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA),<sup>2</sup> and the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>3</sup> say

**NO!**

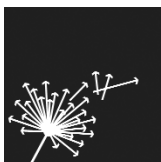
*For periodic tuberculosis (TB) screening by chest x-ray (CXR) to be effective in finding activation of TB, CXRs would need to be obtained unreasonably often, such as daily or weekly.<sup>4</sup>*

Periodic CXRs are not sufficiently productive at identifying TB disease to justify the expense and risk of radiation exposure. Therefore, **periodic** CXRs in asymptomatic employees are **not** recommended as a screening method to determine:

- the presence of communicable TB disease, either at hire or during the course of employment, among employees:
  - with negative tuberculin skin test (TST) results
  - with unknown TST results, or
  - without prior TSTs

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\* Defined as mandatory, routine, and repeated chest x-rays on the same person without specific medical indication for their necessity.



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- progression to TB disease among employees with known TB infection (i.e., history of positive TST result), regardless of treatment, or
- re-activation of TB disease among employees who have completed TB treatment

**A CXR should always be obtained whenever a specific medical indication exists**, such as signs and symptoms of TB, a newly positive TST, a TST conversion, or relevant history.

This information is available at our website: [www.nationaltbcenter.edu](http://www.nationaltbcenter.edu)

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- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for preventing the transmission of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in health-care facilities, 1994. *MMWR* 1994; 43: 40-41.
  - <sup>2</sup> National Center for Devices and Radiological Health. The selection of patients for x-ray examinations: chest x-ray screening examinations. Rockville, MD. Food and Drug Administration; 1983. HHS publication no. (FDA)83-8204:27-29.
  - <sup>3</sup> WHO Technical Report Series. A rational approach to radiodiagnostic investigations: introduction and chest radiology. 1983: 689:7-28.
  - <sup>4</sup> Mangura BT, Reichman LB. Periodic chest radiography: unnecessary, expensive, but still pervasive. *The Lancet* 1999; 353: 9149, 319-320.