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FACT SHEET

THE
LYMPHOCYTE
PROLIFERATION
TEST

WHAT IS THE LYMPHOCYTE PROLIFERATION TEST?

The Lymphocyte Proliferation Test (LPT) is a laboratory test that examines how a type of disease-fighting blood cell in our bodies — called lymphocytes — reacts to beryllium. It is performed on blood drawn from your arm. If the LPT suggests you may have Chronic Beryllium Disease, you will receive information about additional testing that can be done through a special Department of Labor program.

WHAT DO THE RESULTS OF MY TEST MEAN?

If your cells did not react to beryllium very strongly, then your test is called “normal”. It is highly unlikely that you are currently sensitized to beryllium or have Chronic Beryllium Disease. Nevertheless, if you have had prior beryllium exposure you may still become beryllium sensitized in the future. It can take years to develop sensitization in some individuals. Therefore, follow-up tests will be offered to you.

If your cells reacted strongly to beryllium, then the LPT is called “abnormal” and the first thing we need to do is re-test your blood to confirm our results. Medical tests are sometimes difficult to interpret, and so medical doctors like to run a second test to confirm that no error was made.

If both of your tests are abnormal, it might simply mean that you have been exposed to beryllium and your body’s lymphocytes react strongly to beryllium. The tests may indicate something more, however:

- An abnormal LPT may mean that you are more likely than others with similar exposure to develop Chronic Beryllium Disease in the future,

or

- An abnormal LPT, for some, may be an early sign of Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD).

An abnormal LPT alone does NOT mean that you have Chronic Beryllium Disease. It does not mean that you are sick or will get sick. It does mean that you will be asked to undergo further testing by pulmonologists who are experienced in diagnosing Chronic Beryllium Disease. These tests and your consultations with pulmonologists will be paid for by the Department of Labor. You do not have to have any additional tests if you don’t want them.

If your LPT results are abnormal and your current job exposes you to elevated levels of beryllium in the air, you should seriously consider moving, as a precaution, to a job without significant beryllium exposure until a final diagnosis can be made. You have the right to challenge any medical restrictions placed upon you.

If your LPT is abnormal, you should discuss it with your personal physician, especially if you are being treated for another health condition. Upon your request, the results of the LPT, as well as your other examinations, will be sent to the doctors you are seeing. Your doctors can call the doctors performing these tests if they have any technical questions about the testing or the results.

The symptoms of chronic beryllium disease include: shortness of breath (especially with activity), cough, chest pain, fatigue, weight loss, and loss of appetite. If your LPT is normal, but you begin to have any of these symptoms in the future, you may request another test by calling one of the toll-free telephone numbers listed on the other side of this page.

This fact sheet was prepared for your use in part from information supplied by the Workplace Health Fund. It is NOT meant as a substitute for consulting with your own doctor! However, because Chronic Beryllium Disease is rare, most family doctors and internists have not had the opportunity to treat individuals with Chronic Beryllium Disease. For this reason, you may also wish to consult a lung specialist that your doctor recommends. If you do not have a personal physician, you can request a list of board certified pulmonary doctors from the local medical society, or look for a pulmonary doctor in the yellow pages.