



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of Marine and Aviation Operations
Marine Operations Center, Atlantic
Director, Marine Medicine

439 West York St
Norfolk, VA 23510
Voice: 757-441-6320
Fax: 757-441-3760

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SUBJECT: Tuberculosis Tests and COVID-19 Vaccination

TO: All Seeking Clearance to Sail Aboard a NOAA Vessel

FROM: Director, Office of Health Services
CAPT Christian Rathke
Director, Marine Operations
CAPT Dan Simon
Director, Marine Medicine
CDR Jesse McAllister

Under ordinary circumstances, all sailing personnel are required to have a Tuberculosis (TB) test prior sailing and it must remain valid while sailing IAW OMAO 1008 Tuberculosis Protection Program Policy. Recently however, the CDC has issued guidance stating that the COVID-19 vaccine may cause a false positive TB screening test. (Specifically, the approved TB tests are the Tuberculosis Skin Testing (TST) and Interferon Gamma Release Assay Test or IGRA for short, which is an alternative blood test used for TB screening).

The CDC is recommending that personnel should not have a TST or IGRA test until 4 weeks have passed since receiving the 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.¹ Marine Medicine is taking the following actions while applying these CDC recommendations:

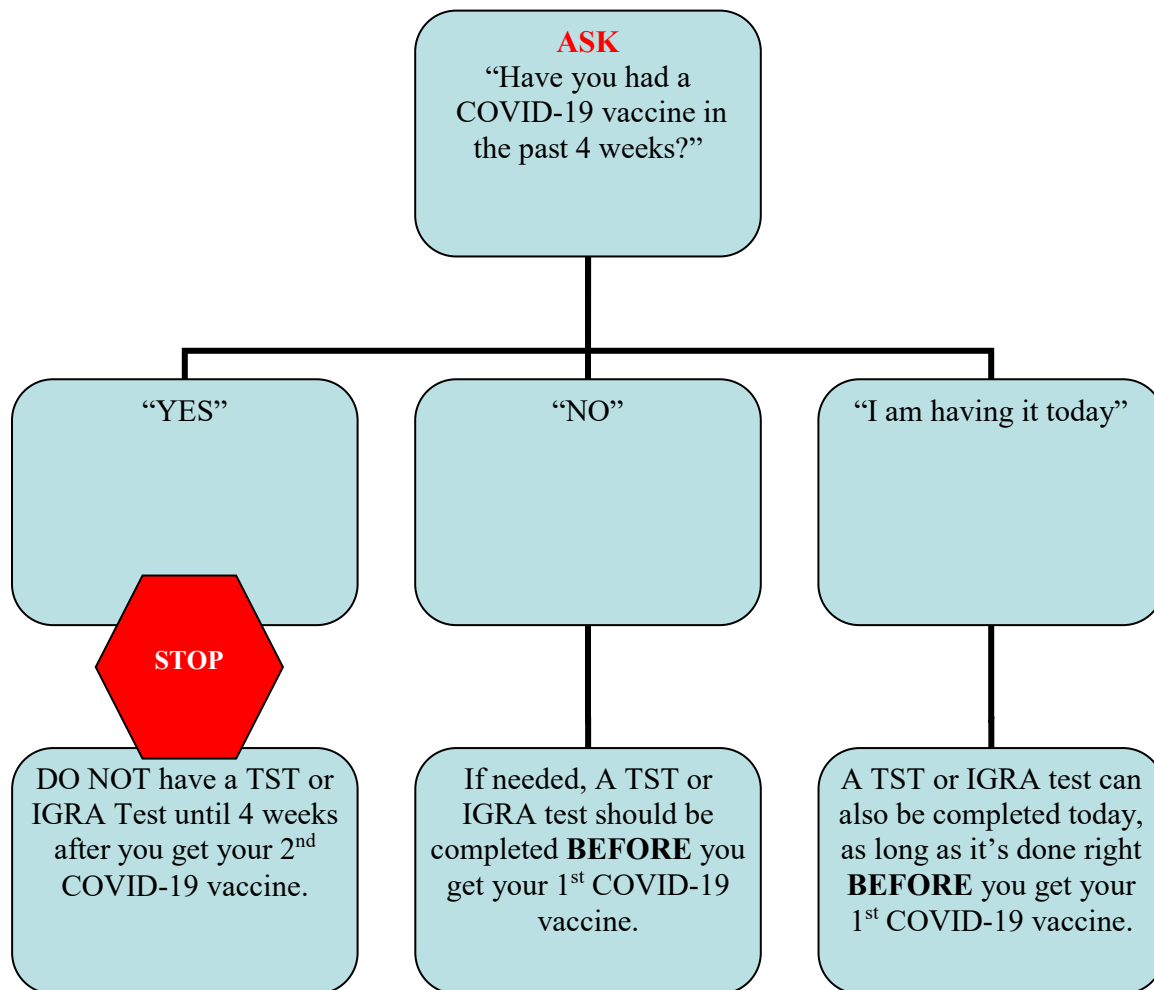
1. COVID-19 vaccine should **not** be delayed because of testing for TB infection.
2. We recommend that if you are due for a TB test within the next 3 months that you shall complete this as soon as possible. You can complete the TB test **all the way up to just before receiving the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine** (as the vaccine can be administered the same day that the COVID-19 vaccination is administered as long as it is done right before).
3. Until further notice, TB tests for sailing personnel who have already received the vaccine is waived until 4 weeks after they have received their second COVID-19 vaccine dose.
 - a. After 4 weeks has passed since their second COVID-19 vaccine dose, personnel shall arrange to complete their TB test as soon as they return to shore and at first available opportunity. Please arrange this with your MPIC, shipboard medical officer and/or your marine health services center.

Guidance for Medical Officers and MPICs regarding the timing of TB screening and administering the COVID-19 vaccination is in Appendix 1 and a chart view explaining the COVID-19 and TB screening requirements are in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1. COVID-19 Vaccination and TB Screening for Medical Officers and MPICs

When was COVID-19 vaccine given?	TB Screening Action
In the past 4 weeks	Delay TST or IGRA until at least 4 weeks after dose 2 of the COVID-19 vaccine was given.
Getting COVID-19 vaccine today	Place TST or draw blood for IGRA just before giving COVID-19 vaccination on the same day.
Never	TST or IGRA can be completed today.

Appendix 2. COVID-19 Vaccination & TB Screening Algorithm for NOAA personnel



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1) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>