

# 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 have Chronic Beryllium Disease, you will be offered further evaluation by a lung doctor (pulmonologist).

## 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 sensitive 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 Energy. 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.

**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. Be sure to check if your medical insurance covers the doctor visits that you schedule, because the Department of Energy will not be responsible for doctor visits scheduled outside of their official program.**