

# Beryllium testing

## National Supplemental Screening Program

### Beryllium Testing Information and Consent Form

#### What is the purpose of the beryllium testing in the NSSP?

The main purpose of this beryllium testing is to determine whether Department of Energy (DOE) former workers may have become sensitized to beryllium and are at elevated risk of developing chronic beryllium disease (CBD).

#### What is the Beryllium Lymphocyte Proliferation Test (BeLPT)?

In the BeLPT, white blood cells that are normally found in the body, called lymphocytes, are examined in the laboratory and separated from other blood cells. Beryllium and other test agents are then added to small groups of these lymphocytes. If the lymphocytes react to the beryllium in a specific way, the test results are “abnormal.” If they do not react to beryllium, the test is “normal.”

Experts believe that the BeLPT shows abnormal results in individuals who have become “sensitized” to beryllium – in other words, those who have developed an immune system response to beryllium. It is unclear what this sensitization means, but studies have shown it can be an early sign of CBD for some people. In others, sensitization might simply mean that the person was exposed to beryllium and that their body has reacted. Having an abnormal BeLPT result is not considered a disease. An abnormal BeLPT result also does *not* mean you will develop CBD. You are being offered the BeLPT because doctors believe it is a useful means of identifying individuals who are at elevated risk for CBD, which can cause irreversible lung damage. Treatment for those diagnosed with CBD is determined by a physician and is typically aimed at minimizing this lung damage.

#### What are the other possible results of a BeLPT?

In addition to “normal” and “abnormal” results, the BeLPT could produce an “uninterpretable” or “borderline” result. As in any other medical test, the BeLPT sometimes fails or provides unclear results. The laboratory calls the BeLPT result “uninterpretable” when it cannot be interpreted due to overgrowth or poor growth of cells, as an example. A “borderline” test result occurs when some of the test findings are not normal but not far enough out of range to meet the criteria for “abnormal.”

Even when the test is successful, it is possible for a person who is not sensitized to beryllium to receive an abnormal result; this is called a “false abnormal” result. It is also possible that the test could show “normal” results for a person who is actually sensitized to beryllium; this is called a “false normal” result.

#### What actions might be required after getting my test results?

If you have an “uninterpretable” or “borderline” BeLPT result, you may be asked to provide another blood sample so the test can be repeated. A repeat test may also be offered for medical confirmation of an abnormal test result. After two abnormal results, the NSSP will not offer further BeLPT testing. **Remember that you may refuse testing at any point during your NSSP medical evaluations.**

If you receive an “abnormal” BeLPT result, you may want to consider further medical tests to confirm or rule out CBD. In such cases, testing and treatment for CBD may be covered by the Department of Labor (DOL) through the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICPA). If applicable, NSSP staff will make sure you have the information you need to apply for these benefits. Only the DOL, not the DOE or the NSSP, can determine eligibility for benefits under this program.

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### Do I have to have the BeLPT done?

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**No.** Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse any of the tests offered to you, including the BeLPT. If you refuse the test and later change your mind, you are free to contact us at any time to request the recommended BeLPT. Talking with your family, your medical provider, or other people you trust may help you decide. NSSP medical professionals and staff can also help answer any questions that you might have and may be contacted at 1-866-812-6703.

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### What will happen if I decide to have the BeLPT blood test?

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A small amount of your blood (enough to fill 3 to 5 small tubes) will be drawn from a vein in your arm and sent to one or two specialized laboratories. There is little physical risk in drawing blood. Slight pain and bruising may occur in a few individuals. Rarely, a needle puncture may become infected.

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### When will I receive the results of my BeLPT blood test?

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It could take up to 8 weeks for you to receive a letter informing you of your test results. The test itself usually takes 8 days to perform. The testing laboratory reports results to the NSSP medical staff, who will then notify you.

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### If my BeLPT results show that I am not sensitized to beryllium, is my beryllium testing finished?

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This is a good question. A small percentage of workers who have normal test results will be found to have abnormal results on their second or third test. Typically, the NSSP does not offer further BeLPTs to individuals who have had 3 normal test results. However, in some cases, a worker who is no longer working with beryllium and no longer actively exposed to beryllium may develop sensitization many years later. If you have had a normal test and develop concerns about having CBD symptoms or a respiratory condition that your physician cannot diagnose, we will offer you retesting if funding is still available.

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### Could an abnormal BeLPT affect my work with beryllium in the future?

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If you are found to have an abnormal BeLPT or if you have CBD, it is advisable to stay away from environments where beryllium may be present. IF YOU RETURN TO WORK AT A DOE SITE, a federal regulation requires that the results of beryllium sensitization and disease testing be transferred to your regular site medical file. This may directly affect your right to work with beryllium at a DOE site. Also, the chance of loss of confidentiality of this information may be higher once the test results are transferred to your medical file.

## What will happen to the records of the medical examination results?

Your test results will be treated as confidential medical records and used or disclosed only as provided by the Privacy Act of 1974, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or as required by a court order or other law. The results of aggregated NSSP tests and examinations may be published in reports or presented at meetings but will not identify any individuals. The results of your BeLPT and other screening tests will be made available to you and, if requested by you, to your personal physician.

The voluntary medical surveillance program will provide free testing for beryllium sensitization. Identifiable information about you and your test results will be placed in a secure database that will be used by the medical surveillance team to notify you of results, keep track of where you are in the surveillance process, and to contact you about future testing. Some of these people (listed below) may require access to records that identify you by name:

1. The ORAU NSSP staff, who will review your results and maintain permanent files for your records.
2. Physicians from ORAU, National Jewish Health (NJH), and the Colorado School of Public Health's Center for Health, Work, & Environment at the University of Colorado, who will review your results and explain whether further testing is necessary for you.
3. Data specialists from Cority, who will maintain the computer records system for the NSSP.
4. Medical support staff at Acuity International, who will make your appointment for your examination and send you information before your appointment.
5. Others as required by the ADA, the Privacy Act of 1974, or court order or other law.

If you have additional questions about your participation in this program, you may call Dr. Jamie Stalker (ORAU) at (303) 423-9585, or the Chair of the Central Department of Energy Institutional Review Board at (865) 574-4359.

## What laws protect my privacy if I consent to participate in the blood BeLPT testing program?

State medical and nursing licensing boards enforce codes of ethics that require doctors and nurses to keep medical information confidential. The Privacy Act prevents unauthorized access to your records without your permission. The information in your records must be handled in accordance with rules established by the ADA and the Privacy Act of 1974. The consent form you sign also provides additional protection.

## Can privacy and confidentiality of my medical records be guaranteed?

**No.** Access to or release of records could be required under court order, but this is unlikely. Records could also be made available as provided by the Freedom of Information Act or the Privacy Act, under conditions such as an emergence of compelling circumstances potentially affecting the health and safety of an individual, for example. If you apply for another job or for insurance, you may be asked to release the records to that future employer or insurance company. Personal identifiers will not be published in any reports.

**NATIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL SCREENING PROGRAM (NSSP)  
BERYLLIUM TESTING  
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

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Sponsor: Department of Energy/Office of Environment, Health, Safety, and Security

**PARTICIPANT'S AUTHORIZATION**

I have read: (Please initial items to indicate that you have read them.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ the attached information about the BeLPT. I have or will contact the NSSP at 1-866-812-6703 to discuss any questions that I may have prior to or after my scheduled appointment. I have read that the test results are confidential, but not anonymous, which means that my name will remain on my test results, but that testing staff will only discuss these results with me or people approved by me. I am free to withdraw without penalty or loss of benefits at any time from all or any part of the program for which I am volunteering, including any part or all of the questionnaire, the blood test, or other medical tests. I may request at any time to have my personal information and data removed from all NSSP databases. I have read that if the results of any test suggest an immediate health problem, whether related to chronic beryllium disease or not, this will be discussed with me by the ORAU medical staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that if I apply for another job or for insurance, I may be asked to release my medical records to that future employer or insurance company.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that the results of any tests, examinations, or analyses of this beryllium screening may be published or presented at meetings, but that I will not be identified personally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that the records of my participation in this program and the results of any tests or examinations to which I consent are confidential medical records that may be used or disclosed only as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Privacy Act of 1974, or as required by a court order or other law.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that if I have additional questions about this program or my participation in it, I can contact Dr. Jamie Stalker (ORAU) at (303) 423-9585, or the Chair of the Central Department of Energy Institutional Review Board at (865) 574-4359.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that I will be given a copy of this Informed Consent Form with the results of my BeLPT.
- \_\_\_\_\_ that only the Department of Labor, not DOE or the NSSP, can determine my eligibility for compensation benefits.

(Continued on the following page)

## CONSENT STATEMENT

I consent to having the blood test called the beryllium lymphocyte proliferation test, or BeLPT.

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Participant Name

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SSN

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Participant Signature

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Date