

## Chennai Corporation gets TB diagnostic machines

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**The GenXpert uses a chemical test that works at the molecular level to detect TB bacteria using a sputum sample.**



Chennai corporation has procured ten GeneXpert tuberculosis detection machines from National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT) as part of the 'Stop TB Partnership' programme.

The civic body aims to have one such machine at one urban primary health centre (UPHC) in each zone. GeneXpert machines will make the detection of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacterium that causes TB, more accurate and faster than the commonly used smear test. Five more machines will be procured for five more zones under the corporation.

The GenXpert uses a chemical test that works at the molecular level to detect TB bacteria using a sputum sample. Unlike the smear test, the diagnosis takes barely an hour or two.

Sputum smear, the usual way of testing TB, is not very accurate and takes two to three weeks for results. Apart from detecting the bacterium, the GeneXpert machine can also detect the resistance of the patient to Rifampicin, the most commonly used drug to treat the illness.

In Chennai, an estimated 203 out of 10,000 people are said to have the disease, which was added to the list of notifiable diseases in 2012.

TB-DOTS (directly observed treatment, short-course) and treatment for MDR-TB (Multi-Drug Resistant TB) is available at all UPHCs in the city. Last year, in Chennai, the number of individuals tested for TB was 74,782, out of which 7,990 patients were diagnosed with TB. The treatment success rate was 80 per cent.

From 2014 to 2016, the corporation was involved in the TB-REACH initiative that enabled relatives in contact with sputum positive patients to undergo screening for the disease.