

Tuberculosis Disease

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by germs (bacteria) that are spread from person to person through the air. TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks or sings.

You become infected with TB when you breathe in the bacteria and it settles in your lungs or other parts of your body. This is called Latent TB Infection (LTBI). It usually takes close, long-lasting and/or frequent contact with someone who is sick with TB disease to become infected.

TB usually affects the lungs but it can also affect any other body parts such as the lymph nodes, kidneys, or spine. TB disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. TB in other parts of the body is usually not infectious.

About 5-10% of people infected with LTBI will develop TB disease at some point during their lifetime.

What is TB Disease?

- TB disease can develop when your body's immune system cannot stop the TB bacteria from multiplying (growing). Once the bacteria start to multiply, they can damage the part of the body they have infected.
- The **signs and symptoms of TB disease** are:
 - ❑ Cough for more than two (2) weeks
 - ❑ Coughing up sputum (phlegm) or blood
 - ❑ Fever, chills
 - ❑ Chest pain when you cough or breathe
 - ❑ Feeling weak and tired
 - ❑ Loss of appetite
 - ❑ Weight loss
 - ❑ Sweating at night
- If the TB bacteria are in your lungs or throat, you may spread the disease to your family and friends. Always cover your mouth when you cough!
- If you are diagnosed with TB disease, you must stay home and away from people until you are no longer coughing up TB bacteria. This will stop the spread of TB to others. Your health care provider will tell you when you can return to work or school.

How do I know if I have TB Disease?

- If you have any symptoms of TB disease, talk to a health care provider.
- The health care provider may send you for some tests to see if you have TB disease. These tests may include:
 - ❑ Tuberculin Skin test – to see if you have TB bacteria in your body
 - ❑ X-ray / Scan – to see if there is damage to your lungs (or other body parts)
 - ❑ Sputum test – if you have a cough, this test will show if bacteria are in your lungs or throat

Can TB Disease be Cured?

- Yes, TB disease can be cured! However, TB bacteria are hard to get rid of and a long treatment is required. You will need to take medicine every day for 6 to 12 months.
- You must take all your medicine until your health care provider tells you to stop.
- TB medicine is provided free of charge from the local Public Health Unit.
- While you are being treated for TB disease, a Public Health Nurse will visit you regularly to help you take your medicine and to provide support and teaching.

If you have any questions about TB disease, please contact your health care provider or speak with a Public Health Nurse by calling 905-546-2063

Updated: January 2021

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