

# Tuberculosis is Curable

## Information about TB



### What is TB?

TB is short for tuberculosis. It is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

### How can I get TB?

When someone has contagious TB, germs in their lungs or airways can spread to others through the air when they cough, sneeze, talk or sing. If you breathe in those germs, you may become infected.

### What happens if I breathe the germs into my lungs?

One of three things can happen:

- Your immune system kills the bacteria and you do not become infected with TB or...
- You become infected with TB but your immune system keeps the germs in an inactive or sleeping state within your body. This is called **Latent TB Infection (LTBI) / Sleeping TB** or...
- You become infected with TB and you develop **active TB disease (TB germs wake up)—this may happen soon after infection** (weeks or months) or years later.



### If I have TB, can it spread to my friends and family?

**TB infection** (LTBI, sleeping TB) cannot be spread to others.

**TB disease** can be spread to others by coughing, sneezing, talking or even singing when it is in the lungs or airways. You cannot spread TB to others by shaking hands or sharing dishes with them. The germs can move around the body and make you sick but most often stay in the lungs and cause illness there.

### How will I feel if I have TB?

If you have sleeping TB, or LTBI, the germs are not making you sick.

If you have active TB disease, you will usually feel sick with some of the following symptoms:

- cough lasting longer than three weeks
- coughing up sputum (phlegm)
- sometimes coughing up blood
- feeling weak or very tired
- no appetite
- weight loss
- fever
- sweating at night
- pain in chest

If you are sick with any of the above symptoms, you should see your health care provider.



## How do I know if I have TB?

The following tests or check-ups are used to check for TB infection or TB disease:

- Personal health history (especially previous TB information)
- Symptoms check list
- TB skin test (also called tst or mantoux test)
- Chest X-ray
- Sputum (phlegm) samples

The results of some or all of these will help the doctor or nurse determine if you have TB infection or TB disease.

## What can increase my risk for TB?

People most likely to develop active TB disease include:

- Those recently infected with TB (especially in the last 2 years)
- Children (especially under the age of 5)
- Past TB disease not treated properly or treated before the 1970's
- Taking medications that weaken the immune system
- People with certain health conditions such as:
  - HIV/AIDS
  - people with organ transplants
  - kidney failure
  - some cancer and cancer treatments
  - diabetes
  - being underweight

## How is TB treated?

If you have **TB infection** (latent or sleeping TB), you **may** be offered antibiotics to prevent the TB from becoming active disease. The treatment can take up to 9 months. It is very important to take all of the medications properly.

If you have **TB disease**, you **must** be treated with antibiotics to kill all of the germs and cure the TB. Treatment usually takes between 6 and 9 months.

TB medicine is usually given by a trained health care worker who will watch you take each dose of medicine. This is called Directly Observed Therapy (DOT).

**FACT: If you stop taking the medicine early or don't take all of the doses, the TB may come back and become a stronger TB germ. When this happens even the best TB antibiotics might not work on the germs anymore. This is called drug resistant TB. Drug resistant TB is more complicated and difficult to treat.**

## What can I do?

Talk to your healthcare provider about your own risk for TB.

Be TB aware - know the symptoms of disease and be aware in yourself and in others.

If you have symptoms of disease get checked as soon as possible. The sooner TB is found and treated, the less it can spread to your friends and family and the better chance you have for complete cure.

Share information about TB with your family, in your school, and around your community.

Support the people in your community that have been affected by TB. TB can affect anyone, anywhere - the proper medications and support can cure TB.

## Together Let's Stop TB

