

What You Should Know About Tuberculosis (TB)

What Is TB?

Tuberculosis, or TB, is a disease caused by bacteria. It usually affects the lungs, but it can also harm other parts of the body like the bones, kidneys, or joints.

Who Can Get TB?

Anyone can get TB—children, teens, and adults. People with weak immune systems, like those with HIV, are more likely to get sick from TB.

How Does TB Spread?

TB spreads through the air. When someone with TB in their lungs coughs or sneezes, the bacteria can float in the air.

You can get infected if you breathe in the bacteria, especially after being around someone with TB for a long time.

TB Infection vs. TB Disease

- **TB Infection:** You have the bacteria in your body, but you don't feel sick and can't spread it to others.
 - **TB Disease:** You feel sick and can spread the bacteria. Doctors can find it using tests and chest X-rays.
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Signs of TB

- A cough that doesn't go away
- Feeling very tired
- Losing weight
- Sweating at night
- A low fever

Some people don't feel sick even if they have TB.

When Do Symptoms Start?

Some people get sick just a few weeks after being infected. Others may not get sick for many years. Most people who get sick do so within two years after infection.

How Long Can Someone Spread TB?

A person with TB in their lungs can spread it until they've been taking the right medicine for a few weeks.

People with TB infection (who don't feel sick) cannot spread it to others.

How Is TB Treated?

- People with TB disease take several medicines for at least six months.
 - People with TB infection can take medicine to stop them from getting sick later.
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How Can I Stay Safe from TB?

- Wash your hands often
 - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
 - Open windows to let in fresh air
 - Go to the doctor if you feel sick
 - Take all your medicine if a doctor gives it to you
 - Don't share cups, straws, or toothbrushes
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If you think you might have TB, talk to a doctor or nurse. TB can be treated with medicine.
