



HEALTH FOR LIFE

Tuberculosis

What Is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is a disease caused by a bacteria. It often effects the lungs. TB may also be in other parts of the body. You can be infected with TB when you breathe this bacteria into your body. Anyone can get TB. You are more at risk if you have a weaker immune system. Your immune system is the part of your body that fights infection. This system can be weakened because of poor diet, illness, medicines, or other causes.

What Are The Symptoms Of TB?

People with TB may have some or all the symptoms listed.

- Weakness
- Chronic cough
- Feeling tired all the time
- Unexplained weight loss
- Coughing up blood
- Fever
- Chest pain

How Is Someone Tested For TB?

A skin test will be used to see if you are infected. A positive test means you have been infected by the bacteria. You may not have an active infection or active TB at this time. Your doctor will do a chest X-ray and sputum tests to see if you have active TB. Your family members and others living with you also will be skin tested.

A negative test often means that you are not infected. The skin test may not react if you have a weak immune system. Also, if you were just exposed, the skin test may not react. Your doctor may check for TB if your skin test is negative, but you still have symptoms of TB.

If you have been infected or have active TB, you will be started on medicines. Your doctor will decide which medicines are best for you.

How Can You Prevent The Spread Of TB?

- You may be on respiratory isolation in the hospital when your skin test is positive or if you are waiting for test results. This prevents others from getting TB. If you have active TB, you will be isolated until you have been on TB medicines for 2 - 3 weeks or your sputum is not infected. During this time, anyone who comes into your room will wear a mask. The door to your room will be closed. You will need to wear a mask when you are out of your room.

- It is very important to take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor. Take your medicines at the same time each day and do not stop taking them unless your doctor tells you to. You may have to take your medicines for 6 - 24 months. If you do not take the medicines, your TB may return and be harder to treat. You may also infect others if you do not take your medicines.
- Some medicines you take to fight the TB infection may hurt your liver. Do not drink alcohol if you are on these medicines because the alcohol may cause liver problems. One of the medicines used to treat TB also may turn your urine and other body fluids orange.
- Cover your mouth when you cough, sneeze, or laugh. Use two-ply tissues and put used tissues in a paper bag for disposal.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you cough, sneeze, or laugh and before meals.
- Your body will best fight TB if you eat a good diet. Eat three balanced meals and drink 6-8 glasses of liquids a day.
- Go to all doctor appointments. Your doctor needs to be sure your medicine is working and to check for side effects.

When To Call Your Doctor:

- Cough becomes worse
- Cough up blood
- Trouble catching your breath
- Lose weight even when you are eating a good diet
- Fevers or night sweats
- Brown urine or gray stools
- Yellow skin or yellow eyes

Ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions on TB.

If you would like more written information, please call the Center for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.