

# About Tuberculosis (TB)

## What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is an infection that can cause a disease that affects the lungs. Tuberculosis can be a serious problem if you're infected. It is sometimes called "TB."

## How does TB spread?

You can catch TB from anyone who is sick with TB disease. The germ that causes TB can travel in the air when a person coughs or sneezes. If you breathe in the germ, you can get infected.

## What happens if I get infected with TB?

**If you get infected with TB, you may not get sick right away.**

- Your body's immune system might fight off the germs that cause TB and you won't get sick

**OR**

- Your body's immune system might not completely fight off the germs. This is called "latent TB." The TB germs stay in your body but you will not get sick right away. You can get sick later on if you do not take medication. If you get sick later on, and develop symptoms, that is called TB disease.

## What are the symptoms of TB disease?

**The symptoms of TB disease can include:**

- A cough that lasts 2 or more weeks
- Sweating at night
- Fever
- Losing weight without trying to

## Should I see a doctor or nurse?

**See your doctor or nurse if:**

- You have been near someone who was sick with TB disease
- You have a cough that has lasted longer than 2-3 weeks and does not seem to be getting better
- You have other symptoms of TB, such as fever, sweating at night, and unexpected weight loss

## Is there a test for TB?

**Yes. There are two kinds of tests for TB, a blood test or a skin test:**

- Blood test: A doctor or nurse will take a blood sample to test for TB. The blood test is the preferred test for people over the age of two and those born outside of the United States.
- Skin test: A doctor or nurse will give you a shot in your arm. After 2 or 3 days, your doctor or nurse will see if there is a bump, and how big the bump is. Only a doctor or nurse can tell if the TB test is positive or negative.

*Your doctor or nurse will decide which test is best for you.*

## What if my TB test is positive?

If your TB test is positive, it means you have TB germs in your body. You will probably need treatment to stop the germs from making you and your loved ones sick. Your doctor may recommend you also get a chest x-ray.

## How is TB treated?

**The good news is that TB is treatable. Your doctor will decide the best treatment options for you and explain how to take the treatment:**

- People with latent TB take 1-2 medicines for at least 3 months, sometimes longer to prevent them from becoming sick
- People who are sick with TB disease must take 3-4 different medicines every day for at least 6 months.

*If you are given medicine to treat latent TB or TB disease, it is very important that you take it all. If you do not take all your medicine, you could get very sick or the medicine won't make you better. If the medicine loses its effect, TB can become even harder to treat.*

## Are there any side effects?

**Yes. The medicines used to treat TB can cause liver problems. While you are taking these medicines. You should not drink alcohol or take medicine such as *Tylenol*. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have signs of liver problems. These include:**

- Feeling very tired
- Jaundice, which is when the skin or white part of the eyes turn yellow
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Having no appetite
- Itchy skin
- Dark-colored urine