



What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

TB can affect any part of the body. It is only infectious in the **lungs** or **throat**.

There are two main kinds of TB infection:

Active TB – TB germs are awake and multiplying in the body, causing TB disease. **You will feel unwell and may become infectious.** See the symptoms section on the right.

Symptoms of active TB include:

- Cough that does not get better
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Heavy night sweats (soaked bedsheets)
- Extreme tiredness or fatigue

Some people also have swollen glands, or may cough up blood.

Latent TB (LTBI) – TB germs are 'asleep' (dormant) in the body. You need a blood or skin test to find out if you have it (chest x-rays cannot see LTBI). It does not make you unwell and you are not infectious to other people. The germ may remain dormant your whole life.

How can I protect myself/my family against TB?

- ✓ Be aware of symptoms
- ✓ See your doctor early if you think you may have symptoms
- ✓ Early diagnosis means you are infectious for a shorter time
- ✓ Talk to your GP about any worries you have about your health

TB is curable

People with TB can make a full recovery.

TB is a serious infection and it still kills many people world wide. It is treatable with a special course of antibiotics.

It is essential that people who have TB finish the whole course of medicine. Sometimes people feel better quickly and stop taking the antibiotics: this means the TB may come back again and be more difficult to treat because of drug resistance .

People usually stop being infectious soon after starting treatment (around 2 weeks).

It is difficult to catch TB

How do you catch TB?

TB is not easily caught. You need to spend a lot of time in close contact, when you are at risk of inhaling the germ. The other person needs to have **active TB** in their **lungs** or **throat**, where it can be spread through coughing, sneezing, talking or even singing.

Who catches TB?

In most cases, the immune system of someone closely exposed to TB will kill the germ, and they will not become ill. A very small number will become unwell with symptoms of **active TB** within a few months. Some will go on to develop **latent TB**. About 1 in 10 people with latent TB will develop active TB disease at some point in the future (usually in the first 5 years following infection). You can be infected by TB more than once.

It is difficult to predict who will develop active TB, but those with the following conditions may be more susceptible:

- Chronic Kidney Disease
- Chronic Respiratory Disease
- Immunosuppression (people whose immune system is not as effective as others)
- Complement disorders (e.g. lupus, rheumatoid arthritis)
- Diabetes

If you are worried that you may have symptoms of TB, or have any of the conditions above, you should talk to your family doctor (GP).

Where can I find more information?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tuberculosis-tb/>

<https://www.thetruthabouttb.org/>

For more information about Latent TB

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TTATBWeb/videos> (available in 7 languages)