

# Tuberculosis

## What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium (germ) called mycobacterium tuberculosis. TB most often affects a person's lungs but can also affect other body parts such as the brain, kidneys, or spine.

## How is it spread?

- It is spread through the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, sings or talks.
- When the TB germ enters a person's body the person may get a TB infection. This TB infection will stay inactive (asleep) as long as your body can fight the infection and stop the germs from growing. When your body can no longer fight the infection the TB germs will grow and spread causing TB disease.
- For some people TB disease can happen within weeks of breathing in the TB germ. Other people may get sick years later when their immune system becomes weak for another reason.

## What is the difference between TB Infection and TB Disease?

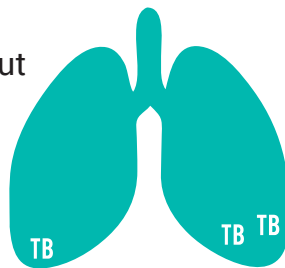
### What is TB Infection?

TB germs are in your body but do not make you sick.

People with TB infection:

- Have no symptoms
- Don't feel sick
- Can't spread TB germs to others
- May develop TB disease if they do not receive treatment for TB infection

TB infection is easy to treat. Taking medicine for TB infection prevents your TB from growing and causing TB disease.

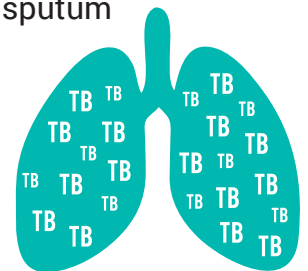


### What is TB Disease?

TB germs are growing and spreading in the body.

People with TB disease:

- Have symptoms that may include:
  - a cough that lasts 2 weeks or longer
  - pain in the chest
  - coughing up blood or sputum
  - weakness or fatigue
  - weight loss
  - no appetite
  - chills
  - fever
  - sweating at night
- Usually feel sick
- May spread TB germs to others
- Need medicine to cure the disease



## How is TB diagnosed?

### TB disease

- If your doctor thinks you have TB disease they may:
  - Ask you to have a sputum test to see if the TB germ is in your lungs.
  - Send you for a chest x ray to see if there is any lung damage from TB.
  - Take a tissue sample (biopsy) to see if you have TB in other body parts.
- If these tests are positive you may have TB disease.

### TB Infection

- If your doctor thinks you have TB infection they will order:
  - A TB skin test (TST) or a blood test called IGRA (Interferon-Gamma Release Assays).
- If the TST or IGRA result is positive, it means the TB germs are in your body and you have TB infection.
- Remember that people with TB infection feel well and show no symptoms.

## How is TB treated?

- TB is treated with medicine (antibiotics).
- People with TB infection take one medicine for 4-9 months.
- Taking medicine for TB infection stops the TB germs from turning into TB disease.
- People with TB disease are treated with 4 or more different medicines for 6-12 months or longer.
- All medicine is free and provided by the local public health unit.
- A Public Health Nurse will support you during your treatment.

## If you think you have TB disease:

- Stay at home and stay away from others.
- Call your family doctor or a walk-in clinic.

If you have questions about TB, please contact your doctor or speak with a Public Health Nurse by calling 905-546-2063.

