

Tuberculosis FactSheet

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People of all ages, all nationalities and all incomes can get tuberculosis (too-burr-cue-low-sis). According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2007 over 13,293 people in the United States became infected with tuberculosis. In 2006, 644 people died from it nationwide. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), reports that there were 1,510 cases reported in 2007. In almost all instances, with modern medicine tuberculosis can be cured.

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that can damage a person's lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness.

How is TB spread?

TB is spread when people, who have active untreated TB germs in their lungs or throat cough, sneeze or speak, and send their germs into the air. People who breathe these germs into their lungs can become infected.

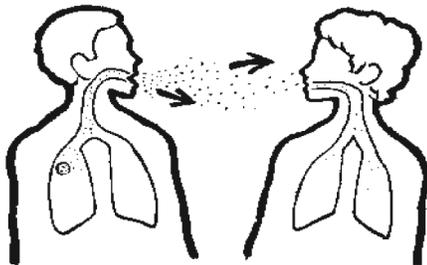
People who breathe in TB germs usually have had very close, day-to-day, contact with someone who has the disease. That's why most people get TB germs from someone they spend a lot of time with, like a family member, friend or close co-worker.

You're not likely to get TB from someone coughing in a restaurant. A person cannot become infected by contact with dishes, drinking glasses, sheets or clothing.

What does having a "TB infection" mean?

Having TB infection means that the TB germs are in the body but they are in an "inactive" state.

**TB
GERMS
SPREAD
THROUGH
THE AIR**



After TB germs enter the body, in most cases, body defenses control the germs by building a wall around them, like the way a scab forms over a cut. The germs can stay alive inside these walls for years in an **inactive** state. While TB germs are **inactive**, they can't do damage, and they can't spread to other people. The person is **infected**, but not sick. He/she probably won't even know that he/she is infected. For most people, the germs will always be inactive.

What is TB disease?

Tuberculosis disease is a serious illness caused by **active** TB germs.

It is possible to get TB disease shortly after the germs enter the body if body defenses are weak.

It is also possible, even after many years, for inactive TB germs to become active when body defenses are weakened. This may be due to aging, a serious illness or disease, or, drug or alcohol abuse, or HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS).

When defenses are weakened and inactive TB germs become active, the germs can then break out of the walls, begin multiplying and damage the lungs or other organs.

If people with TB disease do not take their medication, they can become seriously ill, and may even die. But people with TB can be cured, if they have proper medical treatment and take their medication as prescribed.

What is Drug Resistant TB?

Sometimes, TB germs are "resistant" to one or more of the TB medicines most often prescribed by doctors. When this happens combinations of other TB medicines are given to the patient. Drug resistant TB can take longer to cure than regular TB, but most patients can be cured.

Drug resistant TB develops when a person with active TB stops taking their medicine too soon, or if they have not been given the right TB medicine. A person with untreated drug resistant TB of the lungs or throat can transmit these resistant germs.

What are the signs of TB?

TB can attack any part of the body, but the lungs are the most common target. People with tuberculosis disease may have some or all of the following symptoms:

- a cough that hangs on
- fever
- weight loss
- night sweats
- constant tiredness, and
- loss of appetite.

Sometimes, a person with advanced TB will cough up blood-streaked sputum, which is mucus or phlegm and other material from the respiratory tract.

People with active TB disease may have only mild symptoms. They may be spreading their germs to others without even knowing that they have TB.

What are the tests for TB?

1. The tuberculin *Mantoux* PPD skin test shows if a person has been infected.
2. A **chest X-ray** is given if the *Mantoux* PPD skin test shows that a person has been infected. The X-ray shows if any damage has been done to the lungs.
3. A **sputum test** shows if TB germs are in the thick liquid a person coughs up.

What does my test show?

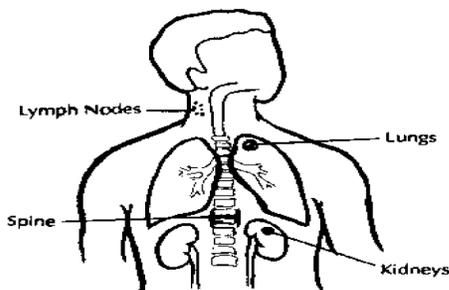
Your tuberculosis skin test (also called a *Mantoux* PPD skin test) shows that you've been infected with the germ that causes tuberculosis. You became infected when you came in contact with someone who had tuberculosis. The kind of tuberculosis infection you have is a mild infection. It is not what is called "active tuberculosis," when people have symptoms such as a cough, fever, night sweats, loss of energy or appetite and weight loss. Even though you don't have symptoms, you will need to take medicine to get rid of the infection.

Who should get tested for TB?

- People who have symptoms of TB.
- People who have had close day-to-day contact with someone who has active TB disease (this could be a family member, friend or co-worker.)
- People who have HIV infection, lowered immunity or certain medical conditions.
- People who are required to for employment or school.

Common Sites for Tuberculosis

Can TB patients infect other people?



Usually, after a week or more of taking effective medication, most patients with TB disease will stop spreading germs. A doctor will test the patient and then decide when the patient is no longer contagious. Most TB patients live at home and can continue their normal activities **as long as they are taking their TB medicine.**

How can we fight TB?

The best way to fight TB is to make sure that people who need medicine take it regularly. They include:

- **People who are sick with TB.** These people have active germs that can infect others. The only way people with TB disease get well is to take medicine as directed.
- **People who are infected but are not sick.** These people have inactive germs that are walled off. These people may not be sick now, but the TB germs can become active later on in life and make them sick. Taking preventive medicine every day, as prescribed by the doctor, is the best way to get rid of TB germs and prevent illness. In some instances, preventive medicine may not be prescribed to some infected people because of their age or certain medical conditions.
- **People who are close contacts to infectious tuberculosis cases, regardless of age.** These individuals should take medicine to prevent TB as directed by the doctor.

How will my doctor treat the tuberculosis infection?

Your doctor will prescribe a medicine called isoniazid (eye-so-nye-ah-zid) to prevent the tuberculosis infection from developing into the active disease and making you feel sick. This medicine must be taken every day for as long as your doctor tells you. Take the medicine on an empty stomach and drink a large glass of water, tea or juice with it. It is important to take all of the medicine. If you do not take all of the pills, you will not be protected against active tuberculosis. Don't drink alcohol or take acetaminophen (brand name: *Tylenol*) when you're taking isoniazid. Always check with your doctor before you take any other medicine because some drugs interact with isoniazid and cause side effects.

Make sure you always have enough pills. It is important that you take the pills every day for as long as your doctor says. You can get isoniazid for free from your local public health department.

If you or anyone you know has questions about TB, you can call Texas Department of State Health Services or your local county or city health department for more information.

This fact sheet was developed to assist the Texas Department of State Health Services in preventing, controlling, and eliminating tuberculosis among the people of Texas. This handout provides a general overview of tuberculosis and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor or contact the Texas Department of State Health Services, Tuberculosis Elimination Division, 1100 West 49th Street, Austin, TX 78765-3199 or telephone (512) 458-7447 or visit their website at: www.dshs.state.tx.us.