



# Tuberculosis

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Version 5

## > About this leaflet

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with information about Tuberculosis, associated symptoms, prevention and treatment options.

## > What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection mostly found in the lungs which can affect any part of the body. TB is almost always curable with a course of medication, usually lasting six months. Only TB of the lungs or throat may be infectious but most people will no longer be infectious within two weeks of starting the correct medication, provided symptoms are much improved.

### How is tuberculosis caught?

When someone with infectious TB of the lungs coughs, the germs can get into the air in small droplets and can be breathed in by other people. People most likely to catch TB are those who have spent a lot of time with the person who has TB – usually partners, other people in the same household or, rarely, close colleagues. It is unlikely that TB will be caught in places such as on a bus/train, since contact for a number of hours is usually necessary to be at risk of infection. TB is not spread by sharing objects, e.g. bed linen, dishes.

### What are the symptoms?

- Cough which lasts for more than three weeks
- Fever and night sweats
- Feeling unusually tired or ill
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood

### How is TB diagnosed?

You will be asked to give a sputum sample, and may also have an x-ray and skin test carried out.

## What is the treatment for TB?

TB is treated with a combination of antibiotic therapies usually lasting six months. These tablets must be taken regularly and the whole course must be completed. Most people receive all their treatment at home but others may be admitted to hospital for a week or so, particularly if they are very ill or if thought to be highly infectious to other people.

## What about people who have been in close contact?

You will be asked by the TB Liaison Nurse to provide a list of the people you spend most time with. The TB Liaison Nurse will contact them and they may be asked to attend a chest clinic for screening.

## Can TB be prevented?

The most important and effective way to prevent the spread of TB is to diagnose people with the disease as soon as possible and ensure they have a full course of treatment. There is a vaccination (Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG)) available which is given only to those at higher risk of catching TB. The BCG vaccine does not prevent TB in all cases so you still need to know the signs and symptoms of TB and seek medical advice at the earliest opportunity.

## ➤ Further information

For further information you can contact:  
Public Health Protection Unit on **0141 201 4917**.

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