

# Tuberculosis (TB) Facts

## TB Can Be Treated

### What is TB?

"TB" is short for a disease called tuberculosis. TB is spread through the air from one person to another. TB germs are passed through the air when someone who is sick with **TB disease** of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, laughs, sings, or sneezes. Anyone near the sick person with **TB disease** can breathe TB germs into their lungs.

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **latent TB infection**. This means you have only inactive (sleeping) TB germs in your body. The inactive germs cannot be passed on to anyone else. However, if these germs wake up or become active in your body and multiply, you will get sick with **TB disease**.

When TB germs are active (multiplying in your body), this is called **TB disease**. These germs usually attack the lungs. They can also attack other parts of the body, such as, the kidneys, brain, or spine. **TB disease** will make you sick. People with **TB disease** may spread the germs to people they spend time with every day.

If the **TB disease** is in your lungs, you may:

- cough a lot,
- cough up mucus or phlegm ("flem"),
- cough up blood, or
- have chest pain when you cough.

### You should ALWAYS COVER YOUR MOUTH when you cough!

If you have **TB disease**, you may also:

- feel weak,
- lose your appetite,
- lose weight,
- have a fever, or
- sweat a lot at night.

These are symptoms of **TB disease**. These symptoms may last for several weeks. Without treatment, they usually get worse.

If you get **TB disease** in another part of the body, the symptoms will be different. Only a doctor can tell you if you have **TB disease**.



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National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention  
Division of Tuberculosis Elimination



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# TB Facts: *You Can Prevent TB*

## What should I do if I have TB?

If you have latent **TB infection**, you may need medicine to prevent getting **TB disease** later. One or more drugs are used to treat latent **TB infection**. It is important that you take your medicine exactly as your doctor or health care worker tells you.

**TB disease** can also be treated by taking medicine. If you have **TB disease**, it is very important that you finish the medicine, and take the drugs exactly as you are told. If you stop taking the drugs too soon, you can become sick again. If you do not take the drugs correctly, the germs that are still alive may become difficult to treat with those drugs. If you have **TB disease**, it takes six months and possibly as long as one year to kill all the TB germs.

**Remember, you will always have TB germs in your body unless you kill them with the right medicine.**

People who are more likely to get sick from **TB disease** include:

- those with HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS);
- those who have been recently infected with TB (in the last two years);
- those who inject illegal drugs;
- babies and young children;
- elderly people;
- those who were not treated correctly for TB in the past; and
- those with certain medical conditions such as diabetes, certain types of cancer, and being underweight.

These people have conditions that make the body weaker, so it is difficult for them to fight TB germs.



**Protect your family and friends from TB — take ALL your TB drugs!**

