



What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis, also known as "TB," is a potentially fatal bacterial disease that usually attacks the lungs, but can also affect other parts of your body such as your spine, brain and kidneys.

How does it spread?

TB germs are spread through the air from person to person when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, laughs or anything else that causes germs to become airborne. TB is not spread by casual contact such as shaking or holding someone's hand, hugging, kissing, sharing food or drink or sharing items with another person.

How would I be at risk for exposure?

Many factors contribute to the possibility of exposure to TB. Every case is different. A person who gets infected may never know when or how they were exposed. A person's health, the environment where contact may have occurred and a person's proximity to the infected person are all factors that have to be considered when determining the risk of exposure.

What symptoms should I be looking for?

Common symptoms of TB disease include feeling weak, weight loss, fever and night sweats. If the disease is in a person's lungs, they may also cough and have chest pain and may cough up blood.

What if I'm not experiencing any symptoms, but I am worried I've been exposed?

Ask your doctor or health care provider for a skin test. TB skin tests should be part of your annual check-up.

Does the skin test hurt?

The skin test involves having a small injection of fluid just under the skin. Most people describe the sensation feeling like a mosquito bite, not an immunization.

What if my skin test results come back positive?

A positive skin test does not mean you have TB disease. Further evaluation by a medical professional will be necessary. Most likely, a chest x-ray will be ordered along with treatment.

How is TB treated?

TB disease can be treated with medications that must be taken for several months. TB patients must finish the medicine and take the drugs exactly as prescribed for maximum efficacy.

What is the difference between latent TB and TB disease?

Not everyone who gets infected with TB gets sick. People who have a positive skin test, and are not sick or show any symptoms, are not contagious and cannot spread the TB infection to others. Only a small percentage of people who are infected with TB will develop the active disease in their lifetime. When an infected person develops the active disease, they are contagious and can spread the disease to others. TB disease is a serious condition that can lead to death if not treated properly.

TB INFECTION		TB DISEASE	
✓ positive skin test	✓ not contagious	✓ symptoms for more than 3 weeks	
✓ no symptoms	✓ normal chest X-ray	✓ contagious	✓ abnormal chest X-ray