

Tuberculosis (TB)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is TB?

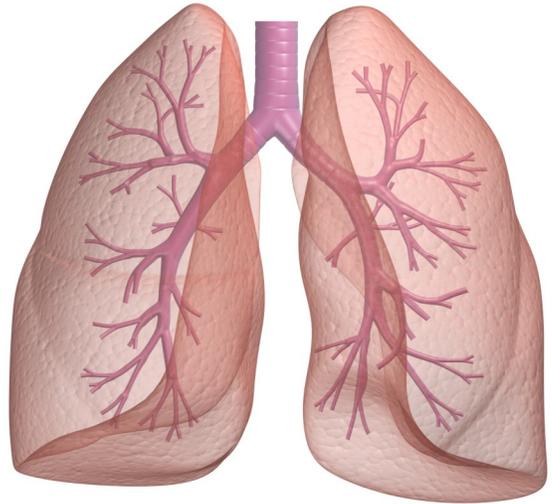
TB is short for tuberculosis. TB is an infection caused by bacteria. The bacteria usually settle in the lungs. Infections may also affect any part of the body, including organs, skin, and bones.

What is latent TB?

Latent infection happens when a person breathes in the TB bacteria and does not become sick. The body is able to fight off the bacteria and stop them from growing.

People with latent infection:

- Have no symptoms
- Don't feel sick
- Can't spread TB bacteria to others
- Usually have a positive TB skin test reaction or positive TB blood test
- May develop TB disease if they do not receive treatment for latent TB infection



What is TB disease?

If the immune system can't stop the bacteria from growing, the TB bacteria become active. When the TB bacteria are actively growing, the person has TB disease. People with TB disease are sick and may spread the infection to other people.

What are the symptoms of TB?

People with TB infection in their lungs have a cough that lasts weeks, pain in their chest, and are coughing up blood. Other symptoms are weakness or fatigue, weight loss, no appetite, chills, fever, and sweating at night. Other symptoms may occur depending on the part of the body affected by TB.

Can TB be spread to other people?

Yes, only if the person has an active infection in their throat or lungs. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or bones, is usually not contagious.

How is TB spread?

The bacteria are spread when the infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. TB is not spread by shaking hands, sharing food, or touching linens. People who are infectious with TB are more likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day. This includes family members, friends, and coworkers.



South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Does Public Health investigate TB?

Yes. TB disease (people with active infections) is reportable (Idaho Administrative Procedure Act 16.02.10) within 3 days of diagnosis. SCPHD investigates every case of TB disease to determine if other people are infected with the bacteria and to reduce the possibility that others may become infected. Individuals in close contact with the case will be encouraged to obtain testing to determine if they have become infected with the TB bacteria. Individuals with TB disease are asked to remain isolated from other people while they are contagious. Individuals with TB disease are not allowed to work in or attend day care or school, or to provide care in a health care facility until they are determined to be non-infectious. SCPHD staff evaluate laboratory tests and talk with physicians to determine when a person is no longer infectious.

Are refugees screened for TB?

Refugees are screened for TB before leaving their host country, and then screened again when they arrive in the U.S. They are not allowed to leave their host country if active TB is detected. As a group, they are screened and monitored very closely, perhaps more than any other group arriving in the United States.

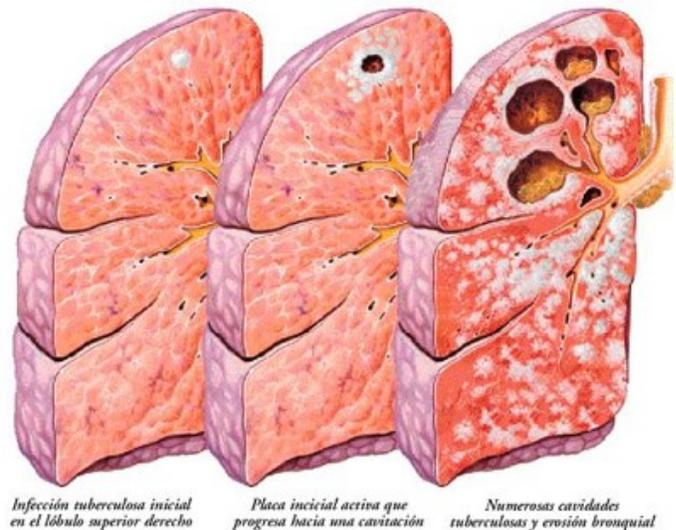
Is latent TB infection treated?

Yes. Individuals with positive TB tests are evaluated by a health care provider. Medication can be prescribed to kill any bacteria that may be dormant (not growing) in the person's body. This medication is usually prescribed for individuals at high risk for developing TB disease. These include:

- People with HIV infection
- People who became infected with TB bacteria in the last 2 years
- Babies and young children
- People who inject illegal drugs
- People who are sick with other diseases that weaken the immune system
- Elderly people
- People who were not treated correctly for TB in the past

How is TB disease treated?

Individuals must take medication for several months. Most individuals are treated for at least 6 months. SCPHD oversees medication administration for all individuals with TB disease. Individuals are given directly observed therapy. This means that another individual makes sure the person takes every dose of medication, to ensure treatment is completed.



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For more information, go to: www.cdc.gov/tb/.