

TUBERCULOSIS FACTS – TB Can be Cured

What is TB?

“TB” is short for a disease called tuberculosis. TB is spread by tiny germs that can float in the air. The TB germs may spray into the air if a person with **TB disease** of the lungs or throat coughs, shouts, or sneezes. The people nearby can breathe TB germs into their lungs.

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **TB infection**. Your immune system traps TB germs with special germ fighters. Your germ fighters keep TB germs from making you sick.

But sometimes, the TB germs can break away and spread. Then they cause **TB disease**. The germs can attack the lungs or other parts of the body. They can go to the kidneys, the brain, or the spine. If anyone has **TB disease**, they need medical help. If they don't get help, they can die.

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

- Feel weak,
- Lose your appetite,
- Lose weight,
- Have a fever, or
- Sweat a lot at night.

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

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

How do I know if I have TB infection or TB disease?

A skin test is the only way to tell if you have **TB infection**. The test is “positive” if a bump about the size of a pencil eraser or bigger appears on your arm. This bump means you probably have **TB infection**.

Other tests can show if you have **TB disease**. An x-ray of your chest can tell if there is damage to your lungs from TB. TB germs may be deep inside your lungs. Phlegm (“flem”) you cough up will be tested in a laboratory to see if the TB germs are in your lung.

If TB germs are in your lungs or throat, you can give **TB infection** to your family and friends. They can get sick with **TB disease**. You may have to be separated from other people until you can’t spread TB germs. This probably won’t be for very long, if you take your medicine.

Can TB disease be cured?

Yes! **TB disease** can be cured by using special drugs that kill TB germs. But TB germs are strong. It takes at least six to nine months of medication to wipe them all out. It is very important that you take all your medicine.

If you stop taking medication too soon, it is a big problem. The TB germs that are still alive become even stronger. You may need stronger drugs to kill these “super” TB germs. This doesn’t have to happen. If you take all of the medicine, the TB germs will die.

A few people have side effects to anti-TB drugs. You will get tests to check on this.

Protect your family and friends from TB – take all your anti-TB drugs!