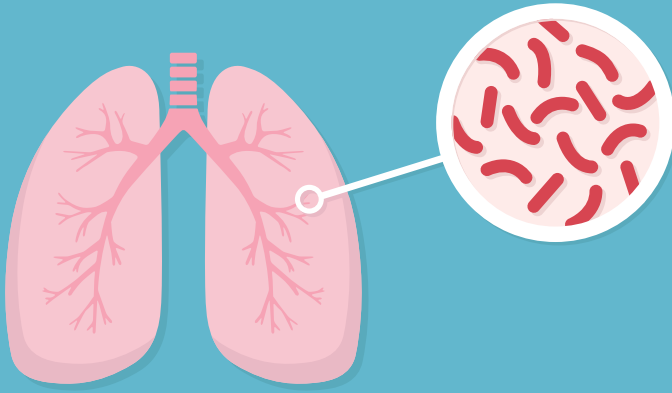




Tuberculosis



Changi
General Hospital
SingHealth



What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It most commonly affects the lung, although the germ can affect almost any tissue or organ in the body.

Is everyone who is exposed to TB infectious?

No. Not everyone who is exposed to TB develop the illness. Usually the body is able to fight the germs to stop them from growing and causing them to be inactive. The germs remain alive in the body and may become active later. This is called latent TB infection.

People with latent TB infection:

- ➡ Have no symptoms
- ➡ Cannot spread TB to others
- ➡ May develop active TB disease later

However, if a person's immune system is weakened, the chances of developing active TB disease is higher. People who have underlying conditions such as diabetes, HIV infection, cancer and kidney disease are at greater risk. A person with TB disease has active germs plus signs of illness.

Some of the symptoms of TB include:

- ➔ Fever
- ➔ Cough lasting longer than 3 weeks
- ➔ Coughing out blood
- ➔ Night sweats
- ➔ Weight loss



How is TB diagnosed?

The common tests for TB are:

- ➔ Chest X-ray can show if TB has damaged the lungs
- ➔ Tuberculin Skin Test (Mantoux test) which shows if a person is likely to be infected with TB
- ➔ Sputum test for smear and culture of TB germs

How can TB spread?

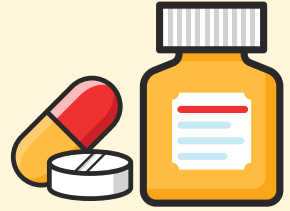
TB can be spread through the air when a person (who is infected with TB in their lungs), coughs or sneezes. People who have close day to day and prolonged contact with an infected person (be it household members, colleagues or friends) are at risk of being infected.

There is minimal risk from occasional contact and virtually no risk from single contact with an infected person. Extra pulmonary TB is the condition wherein TB affects other organs. It is usually not infectious, as the germs are not spread into the air.



Can TB be treated?

Yes. TB is treatable with anti-TB drugs. Treatment usually involves of prescribed drugs for at least 6 to 9 months. It is important that patient with TB disease completes the entire course of anti-TB drugs even if the symptoms of disease resolve and he/she shows signs of improvement.



Patient who fails to complete or comply with standard treatment may not be cured. The TB germ in the body may develop resistance to the drugs, which will make it more difficult to treat.

What precautions are taken to prevent the spread of TB in hospital?

If you are diagnosed with active TB in the lungs and require hospitalisation, you will be nursed in a single room. Staff will wear protective masks when attending to you. You must stay in the room so that you will not spread TB germ to others. You need to wear a mask if you are transported outside the room for X-rays or any other procedures.

Once you have started on anti-TB drugs, the number of TB germs will gradually decrease.

Can I still have visitors?

Yes, you are allowed to have visitors. Your visitors will need to wear a mask to protect themselves before going into your room. Their hands should be washed with soap and water before entering and leaving the room.

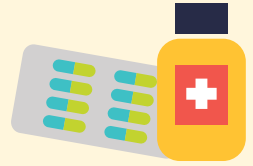
However, children under 12 years old or visitors with low immunity are advised not to visit you while you are hospitalised for TB infection.



How do I prevent myself from spreading TB germs when I return home?

During treatment period, it is important that you:

- ➔ Take your prescribed medication regularly
- ➔ Avoid going to crowded places
- ➔ Always cough and sneeze into tissue paper and throw used tissues properly into a rubbish bin. Wash your hands with soap and water thereafter
- ➔ Use disinfectant to clean any household surfaces that are contaminated with your phlegm
- ➔ Have a separate set of utensils during the initial 2 weeks of TB treatment



Masks are not necessary for you or for anyone who visits your home.

What will happen to my family and close friends who are exposed?

Your close contacts (i.e. family, office colleagues) will receive a letter from TB Control Unit (TBCU) informing them to go for screening at TBCU @ Moulmein Road. It is advisable that they are screened for evidence of infection and they may need to take anti-TB drugs to prevent themselves from developing active TB.





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For more information, please visit www.cgh.com.sg



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