



Latent TB

TB germs are 'asleep' in your body. This stage can last for a very long time – even many years. You don't look or feel sick. Your chest X-ray is usually normal. You can't spread TB to other people. This is usually treated by taking one medicine for up to nine months.

What is the difference between latent TB infection and active TB disease?

When TB germs first enter your body, they can cause latent TB infection. This means that the germs are 'asleep' in your body. If you do not have treatment, latent TB infection can become active TB disease.

Active TB Disease

TB germs are active and spreading. You usually feel unwell. Your doctor will do special tests to find where TB is harming your body.

If the TB germs are in your lungs, you can spread TB to other people by coughing, sneezing, talking or singing. Active TB is treated by taking three to four medicines for at least six months.

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at time of publication.



Contacts of people with Tuberculosis (TB)

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, it usually affects the lungs but it can also affect other parts of the body.

What are the symptoms of active TB disease?

TB disease develops slowly in the body. It can take several months for the symptoms to appear. Any of the following symptoms may be a sign of TB:

- Fever and night sweats
- Cough for more than three weeks
- Losing weight
- Blood in the phlegm (sputum) that you cough up



How is TB spread?

The TB germ is usually spread in the air. People with TB of the lungs can be infectious. This means that they can pass TB to other people. The germ gets into the air when someone who has infectious TB coughs, sneezes or talks. Usually you need to be in close contact for a long time with someone who has infectious TB to become infected with the TB germ yourself.



Can anyone get TB?

Yes. Anyone can get TB but you are at greater risk if you live in the same house as the person who is sick or if you are in very close contact with them.

Only a small number of people who breathe in the TB germ get sick. This can happen within a couple of months of exposure or many years later.

What is contact tracing?

A person who is in close contact with someone with TB, may be identified as a 'TB contact'. If you are identified as a possible TB contact the Department of Public Health will be in touch with you to assess your risk and advise what to do next.

The aim of contact tracing is to stop the spread of TB.

What happens if I am told I am a TB 'contact'?

You will be asked to attend a TB contact tracing clinic.

The doctor will take your medical history and carry out tests. These may include a skin test (called a Mantoux test) that involves a small injection on the inside of your wrist, you may also have a blood test.

You may also need a chest X-ray. There is no reason to stop any of your daily activities. If you have been in contact with someone who has infectious TB, you have only a small chance of developing TB disease.

Will I need treatment if I have been in contact with someone with TB?

If you have active TB disease, you will be sent to a doctor for TB treatment.

If you have latent TB infection, this means you are infected with the TB bacteria but you do not have signs of active TB disease. You may be advised by the doctor to take a course of medicine to prevent the TB germ causing active disease.