

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is caused by germs called bacteria. TB usually affects the lungs. It can be cured with prescription medicine given by a health care provider.

There are two kinds of TB: **TB infection** and **TB disease**. TB infection means you have “sleeping” (inactive) TB germs in your body and cannot infect anyone. These germs can live in your body without making you sick. TB infection can later become TB disease if these germs “wake up” (become active) and multiply. If you have TB disease, you can infect other people.

How does TB spread?

TB spreads through the air from one person to another. TB germs spread when a person with active TB disease coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings or laughs. Anyone near the sick person can breathe in (inhale) the TB germs. You can't catch TB from clothes, dishes, food or body contact with someone who has TB. Transmission of TB is usually associated with prolonged or frequent close contact with a person with active TB disease.

What are the symptoms of TB disease?

- Coughing for more than 2-3 weeks
- Weakness
- Chest pain
- Sweating at night
- No appetite
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Chill
- Coughing up blood or mucus

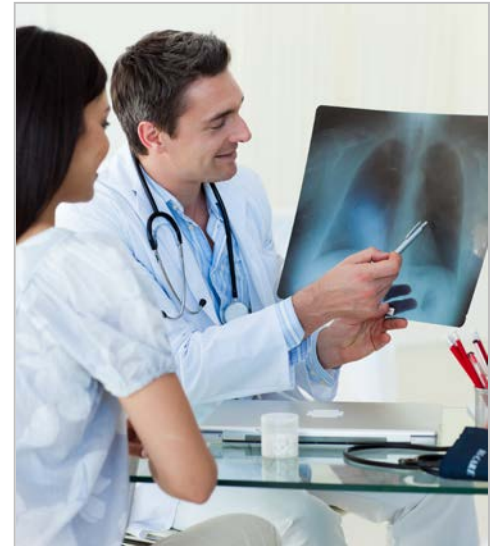
How do you test for TB?

A TB skin test or a blood test is used to find out if a person has TB infection. For the skin test, a small amount of liquid (tuberculin solution) is injected under the skin on the forearm. Then, 2-3 days later, a health care provider checks to see if there is a reaction to the liquid. It may take 8-12 weeks after coming into contact with the germ for your body to show a reaction to the TB skin test. Other tests show if you have TB disease.

What does it mean to have a “positive” test?

A positive TB test shows that the TB germ is present in the person's body but doesn't identify TB disease. Only about 1 out of every 10 people with TB infection will develop TB disease during their lifetime. If it's positive, other tests, like a chest x-ray, will be done to see if it is TB infection or TB disease. Additional tests will be given to people who test positive on the TB tests. Depending on results, you may be asked to get a re-test in a few months, or you may be given treatment.

> more



2 Kinds of Tuberculosis (TB)

TB Infection

A condition when TB germs are in the body but aren't active. People with latent TB infection have no symptoms, don't feel sick, and cannot spread TB to others.

TB Disease

An illness caused when TB bacteria attack a part of the body, usually the lungs. A person with active TB disease can spread TB germs to others.

For More Information

Tuberculosis Control Program
(213) 745-0800

rev 3/1/13

How is TB disease treated?

TB disease can be treated with different anti-TB medicines. It takes at least 6 months to 1 year to kill TB disease in your body. It's very important to take all anti-TB medicine according to schedule. If you don't take the medicines correctly, the germs can become harder to get rid of. If you stop taking the medicines too soon, you can get sick again.

Can TB infection be treated?

Yes. Your health care provider can help you find the medicine that's best for you. If you have TB infection, you can take medicine to help prevent getting TB disease later. Depending on the type of treatment, it will take about 3-9 months to kill the TB germs in your body.

Should someone with TB Disease be restricted from school or work?

People with TB disease can spread TB germs to family and friends. If you have TB disease, you may have to stay away from other people until you can't spread TB germs. Taking your medicines correctly will shorten the time you need to be separated from others.

People with TB infection aren't contagious and can't spread TB to others. As a result, going to school and work is safe.

What is the role of the LA County Department of Public Health in controlling the transmission of TB?

The LA County Department of Public Health works with your health care providers to assure they have current TB screening, testing and treatment procedures. When a person with TB disease is reported to Public Health, our staff conducts an evaluation that includes identifying and screening individuals that may have been exposed to TB disease.

How can TB be prevented?

If you DO NOT have TB disease

- Avoid spending long periods of time in tight spaces with people who have TB disease or who have just begun treatment.
- Ask your health care worker for a TB test if you've spent a lot of time with someone who had TB disease. If you have a negative reaction to the TB test, have it repeated after 2-3 months.

If you DO have TB disease

- Take all your medicines correctly.
- Always cover your mouth when you cough and/or sneeze.



For More Information

Tuberculosis Control Program
(213) 745-0800