

# Tuberculosis

## What is tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is a disease caused by infection with the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacterium. Typically, TB affects the lungs, but can also affect the brain, kidneys, spine and other areas of the body such as lymph nodes.

## What are the types of TB?

People with **TB infection** have the bacteria in their body but do not have symptoms and cannot spread TB. They are skin or blood test positive. However, they may develop active TB disease in the future so preventive treatment is recommended.

People with **active TB disease** usually have one or more symptoms. Some people with active TB can spread TB to others. People with active TB are skin or blood test positive and chest X-ray positive. They need treatment to cure the disease.

## How is TB spread?

TB is spread from person to person through the air, usually only when people are in close contact with an infected person who is coughing over a long period of time. Bacteria enter the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs coughs, sneezes or shouts. Brief contact with someone who has active TB disease is unlikely to cause infection.

## What are the symptoms of active TB?

Symptoms include weakness or tiredness, weight loss, no appetite, chills, fever and/or sweating at night.

Active TB disease in the lungs may cause a bad cough that lasts three weeks or longer, chest pain, coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs).

## How can I find out if I have TB?

If you have TB symptoms or have been exposed to TB, see your primary care provider as soon as possible. Your primary care provider can perform a TB skin or blood test and chest X-ray, if needed. Testing is also available at the Sumner County Health Dept. Call 620-326-2774 to make an appointment.

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## Who is at risk for TB?

Anyone can get TB, but some people are more at risk. Those in the high risk category include:

- Close contacts with someone with TB (such as family member, co-worker, or friend)
- Infants and young children
- Homeless
- Foreign-born individuals from countries where TB is common
- Workers and residents of long-term care facilities
- Prisoners or correctional facility workers
- Alcoholics and/or people who inject illegal drugs
- People with medical conditions that weaken the immune system such as diabetes, certain types of cancer and HIV infection

## How is TB treated?

TB is treated with several antibiotics for three to nine months (TB infection) or six or more months (active TB disease).

## How can I prevent TB?

People with TB infection should take all TB medication to prevent active TB disease in the future.

In many countries, active TB infection is more common than in the United States. When traveling in other countries, avoid close contact or lengthy periods with known TB infected patients in crowded, enclosed environments.

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/>