



## Fact Sheet

# Tuberculosis (TB)

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### **What is tuberculosis (TB)?**

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial disease called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that usually affects the lungs. TB is spread through the air from one person to another when a person with active TB coughs, sneezes, or speaks. TB can also affect the kidney, spine, and brain. Not everyone who is infected with TB becomes sick. People who are infected with TB but have no symptoms have Latent TB Infection (LTBI). When TB bacteria cause illness, this is known as active TB or TB disease.

### **Who gets tuberculosis (TB)?**

Anyone can get TB. However, those at high risk include:

- People who share breathing space with an active TB infected person
- Homeless shelter residents
- Individuals from areas where TB is very common (Latin America, Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Russia)
- Nursing home residents
- Prisoners
- Alcoholics and intravenous drug users
- Diabetic, cancer-diagnosed, or underweight persons
- HIV-infected persons

### **How is tuberculosis (TB) spread?**

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. When a person with active TB disease coughs or sneezes, people nearby may breathe the air and become infected.

When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria may settle in the lungs and begin growing. From there, the bacteria can move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

People with latent TB infections (LTBI) are not contagious.

### **What are the symptoms of active tuberculosis (TB)?**

- A cough that lasts for 3 weeks or more
- Fever and chills
- Night sweats

- Loss of appetite or unexplained weight loss
- Constant tiredness
- Coughing up blood (occasionally)

People who develop the above symptoms should be evaluated by a health care provider. Your provider may administer a TB skin test, blood test, or sputum test. If diagnosed with active TB disease, health care providers will recommend that close contacts (household members, friends, classmates, etc.) be tested for TB.

### **What is the treatment for tuberculosis (TB)?**

Both people with latent (LTBI) and active TB require medical treatment. It is important to see a doctor right away for prompt diagnosis and treatment. LTBI is treatable with medications that are taken from 3 to 9 months. This prevents the person from developing active TB disease. Once LTBI is treated, the chance that person would progress to TB disease decreases by 90%.

TB disease is treatable using antibiotics for 6 to 12 months. This will successfully treat an infected person and prevent spread of the disease. It is very important that those with TB complete the medicine and take the drugs exactly as prescribed. If they stop taking the drugs too soon, they can become sick again.

### **Are there complications from tuberculosis (TB)?**

Left untreated, TB disease can lead to death. TB is one of the leading causes of death among people infected with HIV worldwide.

### **How do I get more information on tuberculosis (TB)?**

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: [www.cdc.gov/tb/](https://www.cdc.gov/tb/)

Spanish: <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/esp/default.htm>

*Tuberculosis*

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.