

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine.

Who is at risk for tuberculosis?

The main risk groups are HIV positive persons, close contacts of active cases of TB and recent immigrants (within last 5 years) from countries where TB is much more common.

How does someone get tuberculosis?

Anyone can get TB – the risk groups previously defined are most likely to acquire TB.

Can tuberculosis be spread from person-to-person?

Yes, TB is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. Usually, prolonged close contact with someone with infectious TB must occur before someone becomes infected.

What are the symptoms of tuberculosis?

People with a positive skin test for TB but no signs of illness (latent TB infection) have the germ that causes TB in their bodies. They are not sick because the germs are inactive in their bodies. They cannot spread the germs to others. However, these people may develop TB disease in the future. They are often prescribed medication to prevent them from developing the disease.

People with TB disease have germs that are active in their body. They usually have symptoms of TB, such as, coughing, weight loss, fever, or night sweats. Usually, people with TB disease of the lungs or throat are capable of spreading the disease to others. They are prescribed drugs that can cure TB.

How long will symptoms last?

For active disease, symptoms will usually persist unless treated properly with anti- TB medications.

How is tuberculosis diagnosed?

A test on material coughed up from the lungs is done to confirm diagnosis. Even if the test is negative for TB, a healthcare provider may diagnosis TB based on symptoms.

How is tuberculosis treated?

The first-line anti-TB agents that form the core of treatment regimens include isoniazid (INH), rifampin (RIF), ethambutol (EMB), and pyrazinamide (PZA). These medications must be taken for 6 - 12 months.

How can tuberculosis be prevented?

Those with latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) should complete a 6-9 month course of INH.