

Tuberculosis risk assessment and screening

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that usually affects the lungs and is caused by an infection with the TB bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

Anyone can get TB, but it is more likely in people who live in countries with high rates of TB or households where someone has TB disease in the lungs. The risk of getting TB in Queensland is low.

There are two types of TB:

- **TB infection**

This occurs when TB bacteria are latent (or 'sleeping') in the body and do not cause a person to become sick. For most people with TB infection, their immune system keeps the bacteria dormant (or 'sleeping').

TB infection causes no symptoms and does not spread to other people. In some people with TB infection, the bacteria can become active and causes TB disease.

- **TB disease (active TB)**

This occurs when TB bacteria are active in the body and causes a person to become sick and unwell. People with TB disease in the lungs or throat are infectious and can spread the TB bacteria to others.

TB disease is very serious and can be dangerous if it is not diagnosed early and treated with antibiotic medication.

People with TB disease can have some or all of the following symptoms:

- A cough lasting more than 2 weeks
- Coughing up blood
- Fevers
- Night sweats
- Weight loss (without trying to lose weight)
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Swollen glands or lumps in the neck or other parts of the body

How is TB spread?

TB spreads through the air when someone with TB in their lung's coughs, sneezes, laughs, sings, or talks. Tiny droplets with TB bacteria come out, and other people can breathe them in and get sick.

How is TB treated?

Antibiotic medications can treat TB and stop it from spreading to others. Even if a person feels better shortly after starting their medication, it is very important to take the medicine until treatment is finished.

More Information:

Visit the [About tuberculosis](#) Queensland Health website

Why do workers in health facilities need a risk assessment?

Queensland Health screens workers including contractors, students, and volunteers to protect patients and staff. TB transmission in health care settings is a significant risk, particularly for vulnerable patients such as young children and people who have a weak immune system.

Who needs TB screening?

You may need screening if you:

- Have lived in or travelled to a country with high TB rates (≥ 40 cases per 100,000 population).
- Have had close or direct contact with someone with infectious TB or TB laboratory specimens.
- Are vulnerable to TB infection due to a medical condition or medicine/treatment you are prescribed.

For more information on TB screening including the tests used to screen for TB refer to the

Refer to Queensland Health's screening page:
[Healthcare Worker & Student TB Screening](#)

What does screening involve?

Screening for TB will involve seeing a doctor or nurse with experience in TB care. Tests used for TB screening can include:

- A TB symptom and history questionnaire.
- A specialised blood test called IGRA.
- A skin test called a Tuberculin Skin Test (TST)
- A chest x-ray if necessary.

What is the cost of screening, assessment, or required treatment?

TB risk assessment, screening, and treatment is **free through public health facilities in Queensland**. If investigations or treatment is arranged through a private provider, the individual will be responsible for the associated costs.

Can I have a vaccine for TB?

The vaccine used to protect against TB is called Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine. BCG vaccine is not routinely recommended for adults.

[Contact a TB Service](#) for more information on BCG vaccination and health care workers.

What if I choose not to participate in the TB risk assessment process?

Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) have a mandatory responsibility to ensure that all workers including contractors, students and volunteers whose role may pose a risk of acquisition and/or transmission of TB are assessed for their risk of TB.

If you choose not to participate, your application for employment, engagement or clinical placement may not proceed.