

Tuberculosis (TB)

WHAT IS TB?



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

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

The risk of getting sick with TB in Queensland is low, and people with TB can be treated with antibiotic medication.

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.

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.

Signs and symptoms

The signs and symptoms of TB disease usually start mild and get worse in the following weeks or months. Some people do not have any symptoms and may not even know they have TB.

People with TB disease can have some, or all of these symptoms:



a cough that lasts for more than 2 weeks



coughing up blood



fevers (feeling hot, sweaty, tired, or cold and shivery).



night sweats



weight loss (without trying to lose weight)



fatigue or always feeling tired



loss of appetite (not feeling hungry)



swollen glands or lumps in the neck or other parts of the body.



Further information:
www.health.qld.gov.au/tuberculosis



Queensland
Government

TB testing

Doctors can use tests to find out if someone has TB, including:



a chest x-ray to look at the lungs



testing phlegm that is coughed up



testing a small piece of body tissue, like from a swollen lump.

There are two main tests to check for TB infection:



a specialised blood test (called IGRA), or



a skin test (called TST) where a liquid is injected into the patient's forearm.

TB treatment

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.

TB treatment usually includes a combination of antibiotic medications that are taken for several months. Sometimes, doctors may give medication to people who have the TB infection before they start to have symptoms or feel sick.

Anyone who has been near or spent time with someone who has TB or have symptoms like a cough that won't go away, fever, or night sweats, should talk to their doctor.

TB testing and follow-up is free at Queensland Health TB services.



Further information:
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