

Tuberculosis



What is TB disease?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs; however TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

TB of the lungs is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are released into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

The symptoms of active TB:

Symptoms of active TB depend on where in the body the TB bacteria are growing. TB bacteria usually grow in the lungs. TB in the lungs may cause symptoms such as

- A bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer.
- Pain in the chest.
- Coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs).

Other symptoms of active TB disease are:

- Weakness or fatigue.
- Weight loss.
- No appetite.
- Chills.
- Fever.
- Sweating at night.

People with active TB can be treated. Antibiotic treatment for TB disease will kill the bacteria, usually after a few weeks of taking the pills. The person is no longer infectious to others and can usually go back to their normal routine as soon as they feel up to it. It is VERY IMPORTANT to keep taking TB drugs to complete treatment otherwise drug-resistant TB may develop. TB drugs are provided free of charge from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

Contact tracing is carried out. Family, friends and coworkers may be asked to have a skin test to see if the infection has spread.