

Tuberculosis

Infectious TB disease

What is infectious TB disease?

Someone with TB disease of the lungs or vocal cords may spread TB to others when they cough or sneeze. The greatest risk of TB transmission occurs when TB bacteria are found in the person's sputum (phlegm).

What happens to someone with infectious TB disease?

A person with TB disease of the lungs or vocal cords feels sick. They usually have symptoms like a cough, fever, night sweats, weight loss and feel very tired. By the time they see a doctor, they may need to be hospitalized. In the hospital they are kept in a special isolation room to protect other patients and health care workers from becoming infected with TB. They are asked to wear a mask if they have to leave this room. Health care workers wear masks when caring for them. Sometimes people with infectious TB disease are kept at home during their treatment.

Antibiotic treatment for TB disease will kill the bacteria in the sputum, 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 done to skin test family, friends and coworkers to look for the spread of TB infection.

Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/tbpc-latb/index.html>

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