

TUBERCULOSIS

Information for patients

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person. Although it is spread in a similar way to a cold or the flu, TB is not as contagious. You would usually have to spend prolonged periods in close contact with an infected person to catch the infection yourself, by living or working with them.

TB is a serious condition, but can be cured with proper treatment.

TB mainly affects the lungs. However, it can affect any part of the body, including the glands, bones, and nervous system.

Typical symptoms of TB include:

- a persistent cough that lasts more than three weeks and usually brings up phlegm, which may be bloody
- loss of weight for no obvious reason
- night sweats
- high temperature (fever)
- general and unusual sense of tiredness and being unwell
- loss of appetite
- new swellings that haven't gone away after a few weeks

If you have any of these symptoms you should make an appointment to see a GP. (These symptoms can have many different causes and are not always a sign of TB)

TB is curable with a course of special antibiotics.

BCG Vaccination is most effective against severe forms of TB in children, but does not prevent all forms of the disease, so even if you have had BCG as a child it is important that you are aware of the symptoms of TB.

For a world map showing countries with high rates of TB, see the World Health Organisation (WHO) website;
http://gamapserver.who.int/mapLibrary/Files/Maps/Global_TBincidence_2013.png

In 2013 around 8,000 cases of TB were reported in the UK. 5,000 of these people had been born outside the UK. Around 40% of people born overseas who develop TB in this country have lived here for over 10 years

For more information on TB see <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Tuberculosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you are in close contact of someone who has been diagnosed with TB and there is a risk you may have the infection, you will be offered a check up at a special TB clinic.