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TUBERCULOSIS

What you need
to know

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Are certain people more at risk of developing Tuberculosis ?

Yes, while everyone exposed to the disease could develop TB, the following people are more at risk:



Immunocompromised people: people with HIV are 30% more likely to develop TB



Smokers: 20% of cases around the world are linked to smoking.



Young age



Diabetes



Alcoholism

Why should Tuberculosis be treated ?

Proper treatment of TB is vital to avoid spreading the disease. A single infected person can pass the disease to as many as 10 or 15 other people with whom he has close contact, in one year. The only way this rampant disease can be curbed is for people to get tested if they have any of the symptoms mentioned, receive treatment and complete the course.

How is Tuberculosis treated ?

Several anti-TB medications are given to TB patients. Daily oral doses must be taken for six months. Over 95% of people who are treated for TB, are completely cured. Sadly the biggest problem in South Africa is that people start feeling better and decide to stop taking their medication.

TURBERCULOSIS -

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is Tuberculosis ?

Tuberculosis is an infectious bacterial disease that usually affects the lungs. The disease can however also affect other organs such as the heart, kidneys, bones and joints. Tuberculosis is often referred to as TB.

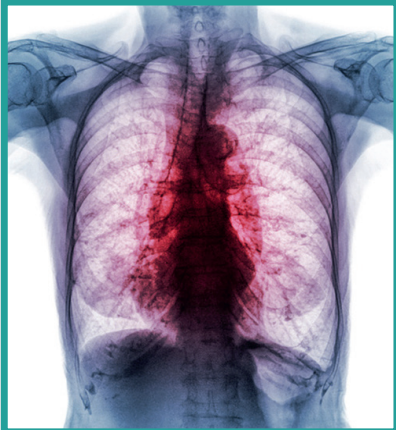
What causes Tuberculosis ?

Tuberculosis is caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacterium.

How is Tuberculosis diagnosed ?

A skin test may be used. In this test, a small amount of testing fluid is injected just under the skin surface on your forearm. If a hard, red bump develops within three days, infection is likely. A sputum (spit) sample may also be taken on two consecutive days. This will be sent to a laboratory and the test result will be available within 48 hours. Only one of these tests needs to be positive to indicate the presence of tuberculosis infection.

If both samples test positive, treatment commences immediately. An X-ray may be used to confirm the diagnosis.



Are there different types of Tuberculosis ?

Yes there are:

Latent Tuberculosis:

In this condition you are infected with TB but the bacteria are inactive, as you display no symptoms of the disease. Latent TB is not contagious. Approximately 2 million people world-wide have Latent TB.

Active Tuberculosis:

This form of TB can make you sick, and you can spread the disease to others.

What are the symptoms of Active Tuberculosis ?

Symptoms may include the following:

Symptoms

- + A persistent cough that lasts for longer than three weeks
- + Coughing up blood or yellow/green mucus
- + Pain when you breathe or cough
- + Shortness of breath
- + Chest pain
- + Losing weight for no reason
- + Fever
- + Night sweats
- + Chills
- + Fatigue
- + Loss of appetite

When TB affects other parts of your body rather than the lungs, the symptoms vary. For instance, TB of the spine may result in backache and the destruction of joints. TB of the kidneys could result in blood in your urine. TB that has infected the brain can cause meningitis.

This is when the bacteria reappears and now, different drugs need to be administered, as the original prescription will no longer be effective. Because of people not following their medical practitioner's instructions, drug-resistant TB is a huge problem, one that could so easily be avoided if the course of medication were completed to begin with.

Are there any lifestyle changes I could make, to help or prevent Tuberculosis ?

- + Cut your chances of contracting the disease, by not smoking.
- + Avoid close contact with people who have contracted the disease.

References: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tuberculosis/basics/definition/con-20021761>; <http://www.health24.com/Medical/tuberculosis>, <http://www.who.int/topics/tuberculosis/en/>; <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/8856.php>; <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/tb-control-programme>

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