



South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Twin Falls 737-5900 * Burley 678-8221 * Gooding 934-4477 * Bellevue 788-4335 * Jerome 324-8838 * Rupert 436-7185

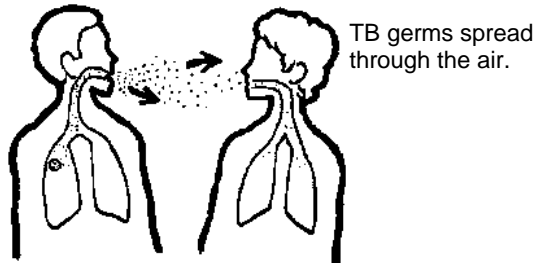
Tuberculosis

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that can damage a person's lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness.

How is TB spread?

TB is spread when people who have active, untreated TB germs in their lungs or throat cough, sneeze or speak, and send their germs into the air. People who breathe these germs into their lungs can become infected.



TB germs spread through the air.

People who breathe in TB germs usually have had very close, day-to-day contact with someone who has the disease. That's why most people get TB germs from someone they spend a lot of time with, like a family member, friend or close co-worker.

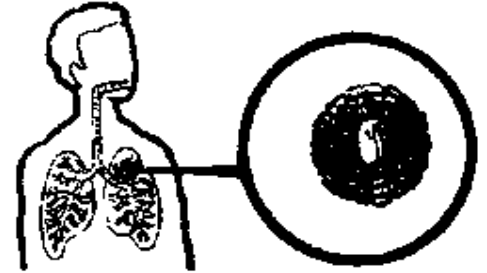
You're not likely to get TB from someone coughing in the subway or a restaurant. Dishes, drinking glasses, sheets, or clothing do not spread it.

What does having TB infection mean?

Having TB infections means that the TB germs are in the body but they are in an "inactive" state.

After TB germs enter the body, in most cases, body defenses control the germs by building a wall around them the way a scab forms over a cut. The germs can stay alive inside these walls for years in an **inactive** state. While TB germs are **inactive**, they can't do damage and can't be spread to other people. The person is **infected**, but not sick. He/she probably won't even know that he/she is infected.

Inactive TB germs can't hurt you now . . .



Millions of Americans have TB infection. For most of them, the germs will always be inactive.

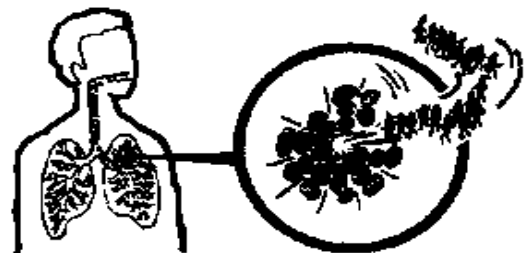
What is TB disease?

Tuberculosis disease is a serious illness caused by **active** TB germs.

It is possible to get TB disease shortly after the germs enter the body if body defenses are weak.

It is also possible, even after many years, for inactive TB germs to become active when body defenses are weakened. This may be due to aging, a serious illness, drug or alcohol abuse, or HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS).

When defenses are weakened and inactive, TB germs become active; the germs can then break out of the walls, begin multiplying, and damage the lungs or other organs.



... When body defenses are weakened, inactive TB germs become active and break out

If people with TB disease do not take their medication, they can become seriously ill and may even die. But people with TB can be cured if they have proper medical treatment and take their medication as prescribed.

What is drug-resistant TB?

Sometimes TB germs are “resistant” to one or more of the TB medicines most often prescribed by doctors. When this happens, combinations of other TB medicines are given to the patient.

Drug-resistant TB can take longer to cure than regular TB, but most patients can be cured.

Drug-resistant TB develops when a person with active TB stops taking their medicine too soon, or if they have not been given the right TB medicine. A person with untreated drug-resistant TB of the lungs or throat can transmit these resistant germs.

What are the signs of TB?

TB can attack any part of the body, but the lungs are the most common target. People with tuberculosis disease may have some or all of the following symptoms:

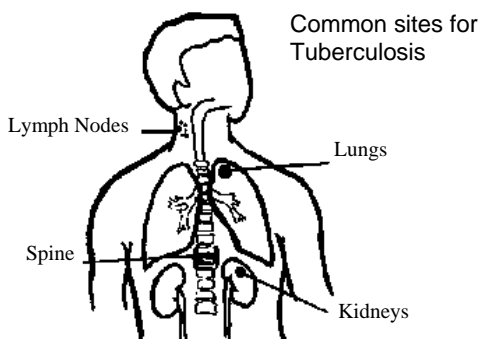
- a cough that hangs on
- weight loss
- constant tiredness
- fevers
- night sweats
- loss of appetite

Sometimes a person with advanced TB will cough up blood-streaked sputum.

People with active TB disease may have only mild symptoms. They may be spreading their germs to others without even knowing that they have TB.

What are the tests for TB?

1. The **tuberculin Mantoux PPD skin test** shows if a person has been infected.
2. A **chest X-ray** is given if the Mantoux skin test shows that a person has been infected. The X-ray shows if any damage has been done to the lungs.
3. A **sputum test** shows if TB germs are in the thick liquid a person coughs up.



Who should get tested for TB?

- People who have symptoms of TB
- People who have had close day-to-day contact with someone who has active TB disease (this could be a family member, friend or co-worker)
- People who have HIV infection, lowered immunity, or certain medical conditions
- People who are required to for employment or school

Can TB patients infect other people?

Usually after a week or more of taking effective medication, most patients with TB disease will stop spreading germs. A doctor will test the patient and then decide when the patient is no longer contagious. Most TB patients live at home and can continue their normal activities **as long as they are taking their TB medicine.**

How can we fight TB?

The best way to fight TB is to make sure that people who need medicine take it regularly. They include:

1. **People who are sick with TB.** These people have active germs that can infect others. The only way people with TB disease get well is to take medicine as directed.
2. **People who are infected but are not sick.** These people may not be sick now, but the TB germs can become active later on in life and make them sick. Taking preventive medicine every day, as prescribed by the doctor, is the best way to get rid of TB germs and prevent illness. In some instances, preventive medicine may not be prescribed to some infected people because of their age or certain medical conditions.
3. **People who are in close contact with infectious tuberculosis cases, regardless of age.** These people should take medicine to prevent TB as directed by the doctor.

For more information, please call your local South Central Public Health District office:

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