

Tuberculosis (TB)



What Is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria that attack the lungs. There are 2 kinds of TB:

- **Active TB** is when the disease starts to make a person feel sick and can spread to others. It's spread when a person with active TB coughs, sneezes, or speaks.
- **Latent TB** does not make you feel sick and does not spread to others. People with **latent TB** are infected with the bacteria but don't have the disease. Some people with **latent TB** may get **active TB** later on. This can happen to people who are older, have poor nutrition, or other health problems.



What Are the Warning Signs of TB?

Symptoms of **active TB** in the lungs include:

- A long-lasting cough
- Coughing up blood or mucus
- Weight loss
- Feeling weak or tired
- Fever and chills
- Night sweats

Latent TB has no symptoms.



How Is TB Diagnosed?

- If you have **active TB**, your doctor may take a chest x-ray.
- Your doctor can do a skin test to check if you have TB. A small amount of fluid will be put into your skin using a needle. After 2 or 3 days, your doctor will look at the needle site to check for signs of TB.
- Your doctor may also do a blood test.
- If your skin or blood test shows that you have TB, your doctor will order a chest X-ray. This will help your doctor know if you have **active TB** that can spread to other people.



How Is TB Treated?

- **Active TB** can be treated and usually cured by taking medicines for 6 to 9 months.
- **Latent TB** can be treated with medicine taken for 4 to 9 months. This medicine will prevent you from getting **active TB**.
- If TB is not treated it can be deadly.

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Questions for My Doctor

- If I have **latent TB**, is it safe for me to be around other people?
- How did I get TB?
- Will I develop **active TB**?
- Do I need treatment?
- What treatment is best for me?
- How long do I have to stay on treatment?
- What medicines are safe to take with TB medicines?
- How long will it take to be cured?
- Can I leave my house and go to work?



Bottom Line

- TB is a disease caused by a type of bacteria that usually attack the lungs. There are 2 types of TB: **active TB** and **latent TB**.
- People with **active TB** feel sick and can make other people sick when they cough, sneeze, or speak. People with **latent TB** are infected with the bacteria but do not have the disease. They do not feel sick and do not spread the disease to others.
- Symptoms of **active TB** include a cough that does not go away, weight loss, feeling weak or tired, fever and chills, and night sweats.
- Your doctor can do a skin or blood test to check if you have TB. A chest X-ray helps your doctor know if you have **active TB** that can spread to others.
- All people with TB will need to take medicines. The disease can usually be cured by taking a few medicines for a long time.

For More Information

- **Medline Plus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tuberculosis.html
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** www.cdc.gov/tb/faqs/

Notes:
