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.
Tuberculosis (TB)

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

• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/tb/faqs/

Notes: