

About TB Alert

TB Alert is the UK's national tuberculosis charity, supporting patients and helping to save lives from TB. We work in the UK, India, Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

More about TB

If you would like to find out more about tuberculosis, please go to www.thetruthabouttb.org or call TB Alert on 01273 234029.

Protect your family and friends from TB

Remember the TB Nurse is here to help you and advise you.

Your TB Nurse is:

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Your Hospital Doctor is:

.....

Contact number:

.....

Email:

.....



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113 Queens Road
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www.tbalert.org.uk

Any information given in this leaflet regarding the diagnosis of tuberculosis is intended to give general information about the subject. It is not intended as a substitute for the knowledge, expertise, skill, and judgment of your TB nurse/doctor or other healthcare professionals. None of the information contained in this leaflet is intended to be used for decisions on diagnosis or treatment. Questions and concerns regarding diagnosis and treatment should be directed to a healthcare professional.



Contact tracing and screening for tuberculosis (TB)

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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection mostly found in the lungs but which can affect any part of the body. TB is curable with a course of medicine, usually lasting 6 months. Only TB of the lungs or throat may be infectious and most people will not be infectious within two weeks of taking the correct medicine.

How is it caught?

When someone with infectious TB of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes, the germs can get into the air in small droplets and other people can breathe them in. People most likely to catch TB are those who have spent a lot of time with the person with TB (usually partners and other people in the same household, or rarely close work colleagues).

It is unlikely that someone could catch TB in a place such as a bus or train, since contact for a number of hours with someone who is infectious is usually necessary to be at risk of infection. TB is not spread by spitting or sharing objects.

What is contact tracing and screening?

When you have been in contact with a person who has infectious TB and they have been coughing or sneezing a lot while close to you, you need to have a check up to find out whether you have been infected or show signs of TB disease.

This is important because the right advice can be given or treatment started if needed. It helps stop TB from spreading further by treating people early if necessary.

The check-up

Is to find out whether you have any symptoms of TB, whether you have already been vaccinated with BCG vaccine (which can provide some protection against TB), or whether you have been infected with TB but have not yet developed symptoms. You may be offered one or more tests such as:

- a skin test called a Mantoux Test. Sometimes this test may have to be repeated within 6-8 weeks
- a blood test
- a chest x-ray.

The results of these tests will help determine the advice or treatment which is best for you.

You should not be surprised if different members of the same family or group are not treated in exactly the same way.

Symptoms to look out for

- A cough which lasts for three weeks or longer, does not respond to normal medicine and keeps getting worse
- Fever (high temperature)
- Sweating at night so much that the bed sheets need changing
- Loss of weight for no reason
- Fatigue (lack of energy or extreme tiredness)
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood (this is very rare but needs immediate medical advice).

All of these symptoms may be signs of other problems, but it is best to see a doctor if you are worried.

What should I do if I've been in contact with someone who has infectious TB?

If you have been in close contact with someone with infectious TB, you should be contacted by your local health service, which will arrange an appointment with you to have your check up. If you are not contacted and you are worried, phone your local chest clinic or GP. If it is thought to be necessary, an appointment will be arranged for you.

Can I carry on with my day-to-day activities?

There is no reason to stop any of your daily activities. Even if you have been a contact of a case of infectious TB, you have only a small chance of developing TB infection or disease and an even smaller chance of having TB that can be passed on to other people.

There is no need to take time off work or school unless you have a cough which has lasted for three weeks or longer, or you feel unwell. If you are strongly suspected of having infectious TB you will be given expert advice.