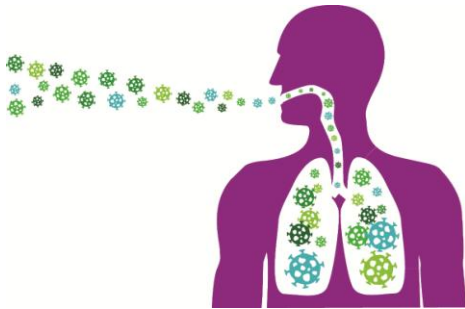




## The new coronavirus (COVID-19) and tuberculosis Questions and Answers – updated 01 April 2020



The following information from TB Alert, the UK's national tuberculosis charity, contains an overview of the new coronavirus as well as more detailed information about how it relates to people affected by tuberculosis (TB).

For detailed information about the coronavirus, please visit the [NHS](#) and [Public Health England](#) web pages.

### What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A new coronavirus is affecting people around the world and in the UK. It causes an illness called COVID-19. COVID-19 mainly affects your lungs and airways.

### How is the coronavirus spread?

The coronavirus spreads in droplets that are sent into the air when someone with the virus coughs or sneezes. If you are nearby, you could breathe these droplets in. The droplets can also land on surfaces where they may be picked up by your hands. If you then touch your face you could become infected with COVID-19.

### I have been diagnosed with active TB. Am I more at risk of COVID-19?

Having TB does not make you more likely to fall ill with COVID-19. However, if you have pulmonary TB any damage to your lungs could make you more vulnerable to other infections such as COVID-19.

### I have been diagnosed with latent TB. Am I more at risk of COVID-19?

If you have latent TB and you are otherwise in good health, you are unlikely to be at more at risk from COVID-19 than the general population.

### How can I protect myself?

For both TB and COVID-19 there are lots of simple but effective measures that you can take to protect yourself.

- always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel

- wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds each time with soap and water or hand sanitiser, especially when you:
  - get home or into work
  - blow your nose, sneeze or cough
  - eat or handle food
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

If you are being treated for active TB, it is as important as ever to take all your medications as prescribed.

### What are the differences between COVID-19 and TB symptoms?

COVID-19	TB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistent cough</li> <li>• high fever</li> <li>• difficulty breathing</li> </ul> <p>Symptoms of COVID-19 usually appear quickly and disappear after about seven days. If they last longer than this, call NHS 111.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cough</li> <li>• fever</li> <li>• weight loss</li> <li>• loss of appetite</li> <li>• night sweats</li> <li>• extreme tiredness</li> </ul> <p>Symptoms of TB appear gradually over the course of several weeks and persist if they are not treated.</p>
<p>It is thought that people with COVID-19 may also experience other cold and flu-like symptoms. Early TB symptoms may also be similar to those of colds and flu.</p>	

**\*\*If you are concerned that you may have COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, difficulty breathing) the current advice is to follow PHE’s guidance on [self-isolation](#). If you are concerned that you may have TB symptoms (cough, fever, weight loss, loss of appetite, night sweats and tiredness) it is important that you seek medical advice. Please call NHS 111 in the first instance\*\***

### I have been diagnosed with active TB. How do I know if I also have COVID-19?

If you have been diagnosed with TB you may already have a range of symptoms. These are most likely to be a result of the TB or side effects to the medication you are taking. However, they could also be caused by other conditions, including COVID-19. It is therefore important to keep a note of all your symptoms and let your TB doctor or nurse know about them, particularly if they worsen.

**\*\*Please speak to your TB doctor or nurse or call NHS 111 urgently if you experience any new symptoms that could be COVID-19 (cough, fever, difficulty breathing) or if your condition worsens in any way\*\***

## **If I develop COVID-19 whilst on treatment for TB, how should I manage this?**

If you fall ill with COVID-19 make sure that you inform your TB doctor or nurse. Stay in regular contact with them and let them know about any symptoms you may have or changes to your condition. It is important that you take all your TB medication as prescribed. Let your TB doctor or nurse know if you need any support with this.

## **I have been cured of TB. How does COVID-19 affect me?**

If you have been cured of TB and do not have any other health conditions then your risk from COVID-19 is likely to be the same as for the general population.

If you have required lung surgery or have been left with lasting damage to your lungs secondary to TB you are considered to be at increased risk from COVID-19. This includes diagnosis with the conditions bronchiectasis or obliterative bronchiolitis. Please follow [current government advice](#) on measures you can take to protect yourself. If you develop any new symptoms that could be COVID-19 (cough, fever and difficulty breathing) call NHS 111 urgently – and remember to explain your medical history of TB.

## **I have an appointment scheduled at the TB clinic, but I am scared that I may be exposed to the coronavirus.**

It is important to keep all appointments scheduled by your TB doctor or Nurse. These are necessary to ensure your treatment is working effectively. Please be reassured that TB services have strict infection control procedures. You may also be able to request for your appointment to be held by telephone, video call or online messaging.

## **I am feeling very anxious about TB and COVID-19. How can I manage this?**

Many people are feeling anxious about COVID-19. It is understandable that you may be very concerned if you are also affected by TB. The [NHS](#) and [Public Health England](#) web pages contain the government's latest information and advice.

Taking practical steps to protect your health, such as following good hygiene measures and getting the rest and nutrition you need, will reduce your risk of illness and also put your mind at ease. It may also help to talk about your concerns. TB Alert supports an [online forum](#) for people affected by TB.

## **About TB Alert**

TB Alert is the UK's national tuberculosis charity. Our vision is the control and ultimate elimination of TB. Our mission is to increase access to effective treatment for all.

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TB Alert is registered charity no. 1071886 and company limited by guarantee no. 3606528. TB Alert is a Stop TB partner and a member of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease.