



TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

What is TB?

TB is a germ that usually attacks the lungs, but can affect almost any part of the body. The person infected with TB does not usually feel ill. The germ may stay in the body for years and the person never gets sick.

What causes TB?

TB is a germ that can cause disease in any part of the body. The germ enters the body through the lungs and usually lives there or in the throat. From the lungs, the germ may move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine and brain. TB in other parts of the body is usually not spread to other people.

How is TB spread?

TB is spread from a person who is infected with the germ to another person through the air. Like the common cold, TB is spread through the air when infected people cough, sneeze or even speak. People nearby, if exposed long enough, may breathe in the germ and become infected. People with TB of the lungs are most likely to spread the germ to those with whom they spend time every day, such as family members, friends, and work mates.

What are the signs and symptoms of TB?

People with TB disease may have an abnormal chest x-ray and a test of a person's mucus coughed up from the lungs. The symptoms of TB include a cough that lasts two or three weeks, chest pain, weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, fever, night sweats, and coughing up blood.

What is the link between TB and HIV-Positive?

TB is harder to diagnose in HIV-positive people. TB progresses faster in HIV-positive people. TB in HIV-positive people is almost certain to be fatal if not diagnosed or not treated.

What is the TB skin test?

The TB skin test is one way to determine if a person has TB infection. This test is called the PPD skin test. For this test, a small amount of testing liquid is put just below the skin, usually on the inner arm. Two or three days later, the tested area is checked to see if a bump has developed and the size of the bump is measured. If the bump is a certain size then the person may have TB infection.

What is the treatment for TB?

If a person is not treated correctly, the person can die. There are five common drugs used to treat TB. Two or three of those drugs are used together to kill the TB germs. The drugs usually need to be taken for at least six months. The person may start to feel better after two to three weeks after starting the drugs, but need to keep taking them as the doctor orders. If the drugs are not taken as ordered by the doctor, the person might become sick again and will be able to infect others with the TB germ.

Can TB be cured?

One in 10 people infected with TB actually develop the disease in their life. Many people carry the germs but most never develop the disease. But other people, especially people who have HIV, get the disease and may spread the TB germs. TB can almost always be cured with drugs.