

LHLs internasjonale tuberkulosestiftelse

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You will be cured of tuberculosis



Who can get TB?

There are people with TB in every country. TB is most common in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe; therefore, the majority of those who get infected and ill come from these parts of the world.

All persons who come from countries where TB is a common disease, must therefore be tested for TB shortly after their arrival in Norway. The tests are undertaken by health personnel in the municipality where you live.

Why are many people afraid of TB?

The reason why people are afraid of TB is usually that they don't know enough about the disease. People who don't have enough knowledge rely on their own ideas or make their own explanations. For instance, many people are afraid of getting infected by TB because they don't know that TB patients who take their medicines every day cannot transmit their disease to others.

Therefore, many TB patients are afraid and hide their disease from others. They fear that people who learn that they have TB will stay away from them, refuse to eat with them, and the like. Persons who have symptoms of TB are also sometimes afraid of this, and this fear may prevent them from visiting a doctor to find out what they are suffering from.

When people have knowledge about TB and know that patients cannot infect others when they are taking effective TB medicines, they will feel safe. They will also be able to give persons with TB better care and support.

Do you want to know more about TB? Visit the web sites of The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (www.fhi.no) or LHL internasjonalt (www.lhl-internasjonalt.no).

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that is caused by bacteria. Bacteria are small, invisible organisms which are found everywhere, including inside people's bodies. Most bacteria are harmless, and even useful. But some bacteria are harmful and may cause diseases that we call infections. The bacteria that can cause TB are bacteria of this kind. If the bacteria attach themselves to an area in the body and multiply, and the body doesn't manage to defend itself, you can get the TB disease.

It is most common to get TB in the lungs, but you can also get it in other parts of the body (for instance in the skeleton, the lymph nodes, or the brain).

- TB is a treatable and curable disease
- TB medicines are free of charge for all persons who stay in Norway

How do you treat TB?

TB is treated with medicines, in most cases tablets. In Norway, these medicines are free of charge. Most patients have to take medicines every day for six months, but sometimes the treatment is longer. Usually, a health worker will come and give you your medicine every day. After you have completed the treatment, you will be cured of TB.

How do you get infected with TB?

TB spreads through the air by small droplets (which you cannot see). The droplets come from the nose and mouth of a person who has infectious TB, and they get into the air when this person coughs, sneezes or talks. The TB bacteria are inside some of these droplets. When other persons breathe in this air, some droplets with TB bacteria can enter their body and reach their lungs.



The TB bacteria don't spread easily, so infections usually occur between persons who live together. It is only lung TB and a rare form of TB in the throat that can be transmitted to others. You cannot be infected by someone who has taken effective TB medicines for 2–3 weeks.

Only a few of those who are infected, get sick

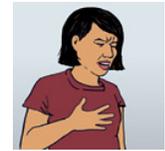
People who are infected by TB bacteria don't necessarily get sick. It is estimated that about 1/3 of the world population carries TB bacteria in their bodies, but only a few develop the disease. The reason why some of the infected persons get sick is that they have reduced immunity. The reduced immunity might be due to other diseases, stress, change of weather, poor nutrition, change of diet, or other reasons. It can take years after someone has been infected before the disease breaks out.

If you are infected by the bacteria, but not sick, the doctor may advise you to take TB medicines for some time (usually three or six months). This is done to prevent that you get sick later. Such treatment is called preventive TB treatment. The treatment is voluntary. Persons who take preventive TB treatment are not sick, and cannot infect others.

How do you know if you have TB?

Someone who has a cough for 2–3 weeks or more could have TB in the lungs. The most common signs of lung TB are:

- Coughing up phlegm from deep inside the lungs, sometimes with blood
- Pain in the chest



Coughing

Other common signs of TB – both lung TB and TB in other parts of the body – are:



Loss of appetite
Weight loss



Feeling weak and
tired



Having fever over
some period of
time



Sweating at
night



Swelling on the neck,
under the arms, or in
the groin

These are also common signs of some other diseases. So, to be sure that it is TB, you have to take different tests. Someone who has one or more of these symptoms should go and see a doctor!

A person with TB often do not have all of these symptoms. Some people only have mild symptoms.

What should you do if you suspect that you have TB?

If you suspect that you have TB, you should visit your doctor, the emergency room (Legevakten) or the health service in your community, as soon as possible. The sooner you start treatment, the sooner you will get cured.

In order to find out if someone has TB, several tests can be taken. The most common tests are x-ray of the lungs, a skin test (that is called Mantoux), and/or a blood test. If the tests show that you are infected by TB bacteria, you will be referred to a specialist at a hospital.

Children may have other symptoms than adults

- Sleep a lot and be lethargic
- Eat little
- Gain little weight
- Night sweats
- Cough rarely

