



# It is important to treat tuberculosis

**What is tuberculosis?** Tuberculosis is a serious infectious disease caused by the bacterium *M. tuberculosis*. The disease may affect all organs of the body, but it most frequently affects the lungs. Tuberculosis is curable with early detection and correct treatment. Tuberculosis treatment is free of charge in Norway.

**How is tuberculosis spread?** Tuberculosis is spread through the air. Only persons with tuberculosis in the lungs can infect others. Some have tuberculosis in their lungs without feeling ill. Even so, they can infect others.

When a person with tuberculosis in the lungs speaks, coughs or sneezes, the bacteria are spread in the air. Other persons can then inhale the bacteria. Tuberculosis is therefore mainly spread among persons living closely together.

**Development of illness** Disease can develop many years after transmission occurred. Not everyone infected develops the disease.

Tuberculosis symptoms occur from the organs of the body that are affected. Common symptoms of tuberculosis in the lungs are long term cough, fever, night sweat and weight loss.

**Treatment of tuberculosis** Tuberculosis is usually treated with tablets for six months. To be cured it is vital that the treatment is completed in the correct manner. All tuberculosis treatment in Norway is therefore given as directly observed treatment. This means that health personnel observe that the patient takes his/her medication as the doctor has prescribed.

Some persons may be offered treatment of infection before they develop the disease. This is called preventive treatment. This is especially important for young children who develop serious forms of tuberculosis more easily than adults.

**Mandatory tuberculosis examination** Tuberculosis examination is mandatory for some groups. This includes, among others, persons from countries where tuberculosis is common who will be spending more than three months in Norway. The examination consists of a skin test, possibly a blood sample and a chest x-ray for persons over 15 years of age.

**The aim of the examination is to:**

- detect the disease as early as possible in order to offer treatment and prevent further spread
- detect persons who are infected with tuberculosis but not ill in order to consider preventive treatment
- offer vaccination (BCG) to persons who are not infected and who are not vaccinated

It is also important that persons without legal residency in Norway are examined for tuberculosis. Test results that indicate tuberculosis infection will not have negative consequences for work or resident permit applications.

Disease can develop many years after transmission occurred. Transmission of tuberculosis can also occur during longer visits to countries where tuberculosis is common. It is important to contact a doctor as soon as possible if symptoms of tuberculosis are observed.

If you would like more information about tuberculosis or wish to be examined, please contact your family doctor/regular general practitioner, your municipal medical officer or the nearest health centre. Personnel at the asylum centres can also offer advice and guidance as to where you can get medical help.