

TUBERCULOSIS (TB) Fact Sheet

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. Usually it affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body including the brain, kidneys and spine.

What are the symptoms of TB?

- Feeling weak or sick
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Productive cough possible blood
- Chest pain

Who can get TB?

- Anyone can get TB, but some individuals are at higher risk.
- People who share the same breathing space (i.e. family members, friends, co-workers) with someone who has tuberculosis disease
- Homeless people
- Foreign born people from countries with high incidence of TB disease
- Nursing home residents
- Alcoholics and intravenous drug users
- People with medical conditions such as diabetes, certain types of cancers, underweight but especially people with HIV infection

How to tell if you have TB?

Get a TB skin or blood test.

If it is positive, you will be given further tests to see if you have TB infection (latent) or TB disease (active).

What is the difference between TB (latent) infections and TB (active) disease?

TB (Latent) Infection

These individuals have the germ that causes TB in their body.

They are not sick because the germ lies inactive in their body. They cannot spread the germ to others.

However, these individuals may develop TB (active) disease in the future, especially if they are in one of the high risk groups.

Medicine can be prescribed for these individuals to prevent them from developing TB disease.

TB (Active) Disease

These individuals are sick from germs that are active in their body. Usually they have one or more symptoms of TB.

They can give the disease to others.

Permanent body damage and death can result from TB.

Medicines which can cure TB are prescribed for these individuals.

Where can I get a TB test?

- Barton Community College Student Health
- Physicians
- Local Health Department

How is a TB skin test given?

A small needle is used to put some testing serum, called tuberculin, just under the skin.

Generally it is done on the inner aspect of the arm.

The individual must return to the clinic in 48 to 72 hours to have the site checked for a reaction.

The size of reaction and risk factors are used to determine the results of the test

How is a TB blood test given?

A small amount of blood is withdrawn generally from the inner aspect of the arm. The blood is sent to a laboratory where results are determined.

Results are generally available in 24 to 30 hours.

What if the test is positive?

A positive reaction indicates that the person has been infected with the TB germ.

It does not necessarily indicate the person has TB disease.

Other tests, such as a chest x-ray and sputum sample are needed to determine if the person has active TB disease.

What should you do if you have TB infection or TB disease?

- Get regular follow-up tests.
- Follow the doctor's advice and recommendations
- **TAKE THE MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED.**

Today, tuberculosis is easily prevented and cured with medications.

How is TB spread?

Tuberculosis is spread in the air.

The TB germs get in the air when a person who has TB (active) disease coughs, sneezes, speaks or sings. Anyone who is around a person with the TB disease can become infected, but usually it requires several days of close contact.

You cannot get TB by:

- Shaking hands
- Sharing food or drink
- Touching bed linens or toilet seats
- Kissing
- You cannot get TB disease from a person who has TB (latent) infection

What is the treatment for tuberculosis (TB)?

To prevent a person with TB infection from getting TB disease medications are prescribed for a 6 to 12 month period.

An individual with TB disease is given at least two prescribed medications for a 6 to 12 month period.

What is the new strain of TB?

There are some individuals with TB disease who do not respond to normal treatment. This type of TB is called Multiple-drug-resistant TB (MDR TB).

Treatment may result in attempts with different combinations of medications. If the right combination cannot be found the person may die.

A PERSON WITH LATENT TB INFECTION:	A PERSON WITH ACTIVE TB DISEASE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No symptoms 	Symptoms may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad cough lasts 3 weeks or longer Pain in chest Coughing up blood or sputum Weakness or fatigue Weight loss No appetite Chills Fever Sweating at night
Does not feel sick	Usually feels sick
Cannot spread TB bacteria to others	May spread TB bacteria to others
Usually has skin or blood test result indicating TB infection	Usually has skin or blood test indicating TB infection
Has a normal Chest X-ray and negative sputum smear	May have an abnormal Chest X-ray and positive sputum smear or culture
Needs treatment for latent infection to prevent active TB disease	Needs treatment to treat active TB disease

Information resources: Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

For further information and resources:

Barton Community College Student Health

studenthealth@bartonccc.edu

Local Health Departments

Physician offices

[Kansas Department of Health and Environment \(KDHE\)](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

[Other Language resources](#)