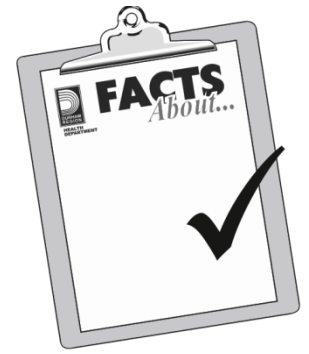




# FACTS *About...*



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## TUBERCULOSIS

### What is it?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease caused by bacteria. TB usually attacks the lungs but can affect any part of the body. TB germs become active when the body's immune system cannot stop the germs from growing. The active TB germs then begin to grow and cause damage to the body.

### How is it spread?

- It only spreads from person to person through the air when someone who is sick with active TB disease in the lungs coughs, talks, sings, or sneezes.
- People breathing in air that has TB germs can become infected. TB is not easy to catch; to become infected it usually takes several hours of close, prolonged contact with a person who has TB disease in their lungs.
- TB is not spread by sharing utensils, plates, cups, clothing, bed linen, furniture, toilets, by shaking hands or by touching surfaces that have been touched by someone with TB.
- People whose TB is in another part of the body (for example, kidneys/lymph nodes) usually cannot spread the TB germs to others.
- Most people who breathe in the TB germs are able to stop them from growing. Most people's immune systems trap the TB germs and keep them inactive. This is called latent TB infection (LTBI). People with LTBI do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms. People with LTBI cannot pass the germs to others. See *Facts About...Latent Tuberculosis Infection*.

### What do I look for?

Symptoms of active TB disease include:

- New or worsening cough that lasts for more than 3 weeks or keeps getting worse
- Feelings of tiredness or weakness
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fever

over . . .

For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



- Chills
- Night sweats
- Chest pain
- Others (based on where the TB germs are located in the body)

If you have any of these symptoms please see your healthcare provider.

## How is it treated?

TB medications are used to treat, prevent and cure TB. TB germs are very strong and are hard to get rid of, so it is important to take the medication every day and as prescribed by your healthcare provider. This is important to treat the disease and prevent drug resistance in the future. A Health Department nurse will be available to provide support during treatment.

TB medications are free from Durham Region Health Department through select local pharmacies.

## How can I protect myself?

- Cover or sneeze into your elbow and encourage others to do the same.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Make sure that you take all medications as prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Follow Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating and stay physically active.
- Avoid smoking.
- If you are ill, stay home and isolate yourself from others.

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