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If you have been diagnosed with tuberculosis, people who live with you or have been in close contact with you should also be tested, even if they have no symptoms. If you have been diagnosed with any tuberculosis, you should get treated by a physician and continue treatment until you have tested negative to ensure the treatment was successful.

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TUBERCULOSIS

Facts & Info

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which usually affects the lungs. However, other parts of the body can be affected.



How do you get tuberculosis?

When someone with tuberculosis (TB) disease of the lung coughs, sneezes, laughs, or sings, TB bacteria get into the air. People who share the same air space with this person may breathe in the bacteria.

Can tuberculosis be prevented?

The only certain way to avoid tuberculosis is to not share space with someone who has the infection. Since the infection can be passed through the air and people with tuberculosis sometimes have few symptoms, it may be difficult to identify someone with the disease. Fortunately, tuberculosis is relatively rare in the United States.

How is tuberculosis diagnosed?

A skin test is given to detect TB infection. If the test is positive, a chest x-ray and other exams will be done to make sure you do not have TB disease.

How is tuberculosis treated?

Antibiotics are recommended for persons with TB disease. Some persons with TB infection may need to take the drugs to prevent TB disease. These drugs are usually taken for 6 to 12 months. The most important factor is for the patient with TB disease to take his/her TB drugs as prescribed by the doctor and to cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Drug resistant TB can develop when TB patients do not take their TB medication as prescribed by the doctor. It makes TB more difficult to treat.

What are the symptoms of tuberculosis?

- feeling weak or sick
- weight loss
- fever
- night sweats
- Symptoms may also include cough, chest pain, and/or coughing up blood
- People may also have TB infection (have the bacteria in their body) but not have the disease. In this state, they cannot spread the disease to others, but may develop it in the future.

What happens if I don't get treated?

If left untreated or if treatment isn't followed, tuberculosis stays in the body and can result in permanent damage to the lungs.

It can also cause infection of the bones, spine, brain and spinal cord, lymph glands and other parts of the body. the damage to the areas may be short-term or permanent.

Worldwide, TB remains one of the leading infectious causes of death.

Tuberculosis can be particularly dangerous to people living with HIV. HIV suppresses the immune system which makes it harder for the body to fight the infection. This may cause people living with HIV to become sicker and much more likely to experience severe damage from the disease.

When will the symptoms appear?

Although most otherwise healthy people never develop the disease, those who do usually begin to notice symptoms two to three months after exposure to the tuberculosis bacteria.