



## Fact Sheet: Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is usually the #1 infectious disease killer in the world – until COVID-19 – claiming 1.5 million lives each year.
- Approximately 9 million people worldwide will become sick with TB each year.
- TB is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body.
- TB bacteria are spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. TB is NOT spread by:
  - Shaking someone's hand
  - Sharing food or drink
  - Touching bed linens or toilet seats
  - Sharing toothbrushes
- When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. From there, they can move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain.
  - TB disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. This means that the bacteria can be spread to other people. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious.
- Once rare in developed countries, tuberculosis infections began increasing in 1985, partly because of the emergence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. HIV weakens a person's immune system so it can't fight the TB germs. In the United States, because of stronger control programs, tuberculosis began to decrease again in 1993, but remains a concern.
  - Although the number of people with disease has declined, TB remains a public health concern in Oklahoma.
    - Oklahoma currently ranks #25 in the U.S. for TB disease
    - There were 67 reported cases of Tuberculosis in Oklahoma in 2020
- Anyone can get TB. People at greater risk are: family members, friends, and coworkers who share the same air space with the person who has TB disease of the lungs. Others at risk include the elderly, homeless, prisoners, nursing home residents, alcoholics, injection drug users, people with medical conditions such as diabetes, HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS), other immunosuppressed conditions which include cancer, and people who are chronically malnourished.



- Although your body may harbor the bacteria that cause TB, your immune system usually can prevent you from becoming sick. For this reason, doctors make a distinction between:
  - **Latent TB Infection:** In this condition, you have a TB infection, but the bacteria remain in your body in an inactive state and cause no symptoms. Latent TB, also called inactive TB or TB infection, isn't contagious. It can turn into active TB, so treatment is important for the person with latent TB and to help control the spread of TB. An estimated 2-3 billion people worldwide have latent TB.
  - **Active TB Disease:** This condition makes you sick and in most cases can spread to others. It can occur in the first few weeks after infection with the TB bacteria, or it might occur years later. Signs and symptoms of active TB include:
    - Coughing that lasts three or more weeks
    - Coughing up blood
    - Chest pain or pain with breathing or coughing
    - Unintentional weight loss
    - Fatigue
    - Fever
    - Night sweats
    - Chills
    - Loss of appetite
- TB infection is detected by a skin test. If the skin test is positive, a chest x-ray and other exams will be done to make sure you do not have TB disease. You can get free TB tests at many of your local health departments or you may go to your private doctor for a blood test.
- Tuberculosis drugs (antibiotics) are recommended for persons with TB disease. Some persons with TB infection may need to take drugs to prevent TB disease. These drugs are usually taken for 3 to 9 months.
  - Some strains of tuberculosis resist the drugs most used to treat the disease. People with active tuberculosis must take several types of medications for many months to eradicate the disease and prevent further development of antibiotic resistance.
- RELATED VIDEO: [5 Things to Know About TB](#) (Source: CDC)
- For more information, please call Acute Disease Service (405) 426-8710 or visit [ads.health.ok.gov](http://ads.health.ok.gov).