



Tuberculosis

What is TB?	What is the exposure time for a healthy person to possibly contract TB?
Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease primarily affecting the lungs and caused by a bacteria called <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> . It can spread from person to person when a person with TB of the lungs or vocal cords coughs or sneezes the bacteria into the air. TB can also affect the brain, kidneys, or the spine but is not spread directly from these organs.	For a healthy person to be infected with the TB bacteria, they generally must have prolonged close exposure to someone with active TB, for example a family member living in the same house (i.e. greater than 8 hours a day for several months). Even then it usually takes many months after the first person is infected for others to become infected. Children and those with a weakened immune system are more susceptible.
What are the Symptoms of TB?	How do you test for TB?
The symptoms of TB of the lungs include a persistent unexplained cough and sometimes coughing up blood and/or chest pain. General symptoms of TB include unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite, fever, night sweats, and fatigue.	The tuberculin skin test (TST) is the standard test used for screening for TB infection. It consists of an injection a purified protein derivative (PPD) of the TB organism just under the skin. Development of induration (a hard lump) at the site of the injection in 48 -72 hours is the sign of an infection. However this test cannot distinguish active TB from latent TB. Active TB is diagnosed by chest x-ray or CT and examination of sputum (phlegm) for the TB organism.
How does TB spread?	In general, when would someone be tested for TB?
If a person with active TB disease affecting the lungs or vocal cords coughs or sneezes expelling the TB bacteria into the air, the TB bacteria can stay in the air for several hours depending on the environment.	Skin testing for TB is conducted on persons who have had a significant exposure to someone with active TB before the individual began appropriate treatment. The local Health Department makes that determination based on the exposure risk investigation.
What is Active TB?	Can TB Disease be Treated and how?
Active TB means that a person has an infection with TB organisms that is multiplying in the affected organs. A person with active TB of the lungs or vocal cords is usually experiencing one or more of the symptoms listed above.	Yes TB disease can be treated. TB is treated by taking two or more medications for 6 to 12 months. These medications must be taken continuously for the period of time prescribed by the treating health care professional.
What is Latent TB?	Where can I find more information about TB?
People with latent TB have the TB bacteria in their body but the organisms are not multiplying. The person is not ill and will not have the symptoms of active TB. They cannot spread the disease because they don't have active TB and do not expel the organisms into the air. People with latent TB infection can take medicine to prevent the development of active TB disease.	You can find more information regarding TB on the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/tb .