

# TB fact sheet

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs, although it can affect other parts of the body too.

You have been given this fact sheet to help you understand more about TB and what this means for you and your family.

## If you have been diagnosed

### Common symptoms

The most common symptoms of TB include:

- a persistent cough for more than three weeks
- lack of appetite and weight loss
- fever and/or night sweats
- extreme tiredness and fatigue
- new swellings that have not gone away after a few weeks
- coughing up blood.

All of these symptoms may also be signs of other illnesses.

If a health professional suspects you have TB, you will be offered a check-up at a TB clinic.

### Can it be cured?

Yes. TB is treated with a combination of antibiotics. You will usually begin to feel better about two to four weeks after starting the antibiotics.

It is important to take your medicine exactly as prescribed and to complete the whole course of antibiotics in order to cure the disease. If you stop taking the antibiotics before six months, the TB may become more serious and much more difficult to treat. You may pass on this more serious form of the infection to your family and friends.



**If TB is not treated properly, it may lead to death.**



### The BCG vaccine

The BCG vaccine offers protection against TB, and is recommended for babies and children under the age of 16 who are considered to be at risk of catching TB. More information about TB and the BCG vaccine is available at [www.nhsinform.scot/bcg](http://www.nhsinform.scot/bcg)

# If you have not been diagnosed, but are at risk

## How is TB spread and am I likely to get infected?

TB is usually spread when people with infectious TB in their lungs cough or sneeze. However, it usually takes close and lengthy contact with an infectious person to catch the disease.

## Are some people more at risk than others?

Anyone can catch TB, but you are more at risk if you:

- live with someone who has infectious TB or have been in lengthy close contact with them
- are living in unhealthy or overcrowded conditions, are homeless or sleeping rough
- are dependent on drugs or alcohol
- have spent a long time in countries within south-east Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and some countries in eastern Europe which have high rates of TB
- may have been exposed to TB when you were young, when TB was more common in this country
- have parents or grandparents who come from a country which has a high rate of TB
- have been in prison
- are unable to fight infection due to illness (e.g. HIV infection) or treatment (e.g. anti-TNF therapy)
- do not eat enough to stay healthy.

**Not everyone with TB in their lungs is infectious. Once they are taking the right treatment, most people who are infectious become non-infectious after about two weeks.**



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