



Tuberculosis (TB)

This leaflet will provide you with some information about TB and answer some common questions.

- TB (tuberculosis) is an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs.
- About 8000 people get TB each year in the UK.
- **TB is not easy to catch.** You need to live with or have close and lengthy contact with someone with infectious TB.
- **TB is curable with a course of special antibiotics.**
- Everybody should be aware of the symptoms of the disease so they can seek treatment as soon as possible.
- The most important action to protect people is to ensure that all TB cases are diagnosed quickly and fully treated.
- If you are a close contact of someone who has infectious TB you will be offered a check-up at a special TB clinic.
- **Please co-operate fully with the health services if you are contacted.**
- **If you have any questions please ask your doctor or contact the Derby TB service: 01332 787 995.**

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

TB can only be caught from someone with infectious TB in their lungs or throat. Although TB is spread through the air when people who have the disease cough or sneeze, it takes close and lengthy contact with an infectious person to catch the disease. Using public transport and going about your normal daily business does not put you at increased risk of getting TB.

How will I know if I've got TB?

The most common symptoms of TB include:

- a persistent cough that gets worse
- loss of weight
- fever and heavy night sweats

- a general and unusual sense of tiredness and being unwell
- Coughing up blood.

All these may also be signs of other problems but if you have them and are worried, talk to a doctor or nurse at your local surgery or clinic, or go to an NHS walk-in centre or phone NHS on 111.

The sooner you are treated, the less likely you are to become more seriously ill or to pass TB on to your family or friends.

Could I have TB with no symptoms?

It is possible to have hidden TB. This means you have been in contact with the TB in the past, but your body is keeping the disease under control and you may not feel unwell. People with hidden TB don't have symptoms and may only find out when tested. Hidden TB cannot be passed on to other people, but it is important to be treated if you are told you have hidden or latent TB.

If I have TB, can I be cured?

Yes, TB can be treated with special antibiotics. Once treatment starts, you will begin to feel better after about two weeks and be able to return to your normal activities. But the treatment has to continue for at least six months. If TB is not treated properly, it may lead to the spread of TB that is resistant to antibiotics or possibly death.

I thought TB was prevented by a vaccine?

There is a vaccine (BCG) that has been in use for many years to help protect against TB. BCG works best to prevent the more serious forms of TB in children. However, the BCG vaccine does not prevent TB in all cases so you still need to know the signs and symptoms of TB.

More information

There is a special NHS TB service based in Derby. If you have any questions please call 01332 787 995.

www.immunisation.nhs.uk
www.tbalert.org
www.hpa.org.uk