

## Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis is a serious infection in the lungs caused by bacteria called Mycobacterium Tuberculosis. This infection spreads through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, spits, or talks. Transmission is more likely when the person's immune system is weak. If the infection is not treated properly, it could be fatal.

### What are the signs and symptoms of Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis can be active or latent in the body. Active means that bacteria are present and causing symptoms, making the infection spreadable. Once contagion occurs, symptoms can appear weeks or even years later. Latent means that the bacteria are present, but symptoms are not felt, and disease is not transmitted. Tuberculosis can usually lodge in the lungs, however, it can also affect other parts of the body such as the kidneys, spine, or brain. The signs and symptoms may vary depending on where the bacteria is located, and according to the affected organs.

#### Signs and symptoms:

- Fever, chills, or night sweats
- Cough that lasts for more than 3 weeks
- Blood in the sputum (mucus that comes from the lungs)
- Chest or upper back pain, especially when breathing
- Short of breath
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss without trying

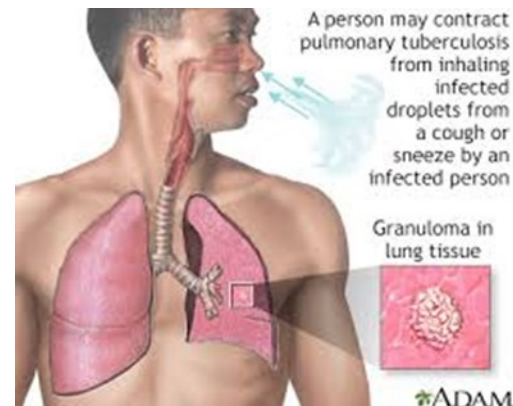
#### Who is most at risk of contagion?

Anyone can suffer from Tuberculosis, however, there are many reasons that can make a person vulnerable to infection:

- Suffering from illnesses or undergoing treatments that weaken the immune system. For example, being diagnosed with HIV, diabetes, kidney disease, certain types of cancers, treatments

such as chemotherapy, and medications such as those used to treat arthritis, Crohn's disease, and psoriasis.

- Being in areas where contagion levels are higher.
- Use of intravenous substances, alcohol, or tobacco.
- Work in places or professions related to health care.
- Living or being in contact with an infected person.



#### How is Tuberculosis diagnosed?

- **Tuberculin test:** consists of an injection in the forearm, which is checked after 2 to 3 days to check for signs of Tuberculosis.
- **Blood tests:** could detect Tuberculosis infection and organ function.
- **X-ray or CT scan of the chest:** may detect inflammation, infection, or a collapse in the lungs.
- **Sputum sample:** This is examined to determine if the bacteria that cause tuberculosis are present.

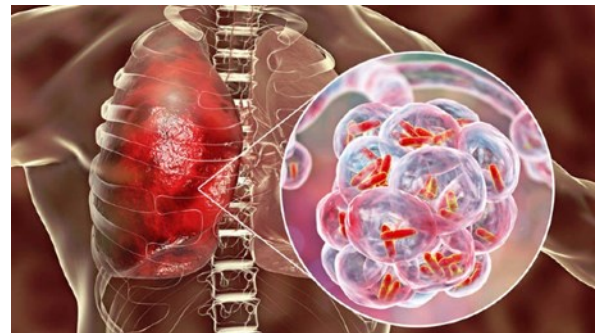
## What is the treatment for Tuberculosis?

Depending on the age, the state of health in general, the affected organs and the type of tuberculosis diagnosed, it will be the treatment to follow.

- Latent: 2 to 3 types of medicine may be needed to treat it.
- Active: Several medications may be needed at the same time, including antibiotics for at least 6 to 9 months.

Some types of tuberculosis are resistant to drugs. Some recommendations for the treatment to be effective and to control the spread of the infection are:

- **Take medications as directed:** Abandoning treatment or missing doses can allow bacteria that are still alive to become resistant to medications, thus reducing their effectiveness.
- **Wash your hands often:** Using soap and water to wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing a child's diaper, sneezing, and before preparing or eating food reduces the chance of spreading germs, viruses, and bacteria.
- **Cover your mouth and nose:** the probability of contagion is reduced by using a mask and disposable tissues while coughing, sneezing, or talking.
- **Avoid close contact with other people:** Babies and older adults are at higher risk of getting infected. If there is a suspicion of having infected others, encourage them to get tested to prevent complications.



## Social and Emotional Aspect

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise, please visit your primary care physician, or contact the following phone lines:

### Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804

### APS Healthcare

787-641-9133

### References:

*Tuberculosis.* (2021). Retrieved from: <https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/tuberculosis.html>

*Tuberculosis.* (2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/tuberculosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351250>

Prepared by licensed Health Educators.

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