

Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection that can affect almost any part of the body, but it mostly affects the lungs. It is not common in Australia but is very common in other areas of the world.

People with TB may have symptoms such as fever, tiredness, sweating (especially at night), weight loss and a persistent cough that does not go away with normal treatment. The cough may produce phlegm and sometimes blood. A chest X-ray can help diagnose TB.

TB infection and TB disease are different. People with TB disease are sick because the germs are active in their body. They usually have one or more symptoms of TB. These people can spread TB to others. People with TB infection (but not TB disease) have the germs that cause TB in their body, but they are not sick because the germs are not actively causing disease. These people cannot spread the infection to others. Most people with TB infection do not become sick. However, the TB germs can remain within their body for years and can become active.

How it spreads

TB spreads from person to person via infected droplets in the air. People get infected by breathing in droplets when a person with active TB disease breathes, coughs or sneezes on them. Remember, people who are infected with TB but who do not have TB disease cannot spread the infection.

Exclusion period

Talk to your local public health unit for advice about exclusion.

Actions for educators and other staff

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Talk to your public health unit for advice about screening, antibiotics or accessing TB clinics. In the Northern Territory, education and care services must notify their local public health unit about any cases of TB in the service.

Ensure staff and children have good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Keep your child at home until the local public health unit says they can return to care.

Teach your child to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into a bin and wash their hands. If there are no tissues nearby, teach them to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow instead of their hands.

More information about TB

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of TB (healthdirect.gov.au/tuberculosis).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.