



Tuberculosis (TB) Information

What is TB?

“TB” is short for a bacteria (a mycobacterium) called tuberculosis. TB bacteria are passed through the air when someone who is sick with **Active TB (Disease)** of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, laughs, sings, or sneezes. Anyone near the sick person can breathe TB bacteria into their lungs.

How could I have been exposed to TB?

You may have been exposed to TB if you spent time near someone with **Active TB** of the lungs or throat. There was a patient hospitalized at Evans during May that had Active TB. If you cared for the patient, you may have been exposed (you will be contacted by Preventive Medicine or Infection Control if you are considered to be at high risk). People that are deployed or that travel overseas are also frequently exposed.

If I was exposed to TB how likely is it that I am infected?

TB is not a highly infectious organism. The majority (over 70%) of people that have prolonged, close contact with people with Active TB (Disease) do **not** become infected. The only way to know for sure if you are infected is to test with a Tuberculin Skin Test (TST or PPD) or a Quantiferon blood test.

What happens if I am infected?

For approximately 90% of people that are infected, the body’s immune system suppresses the infection and the TB germ lives in their body for the rest of their life without ever making them sick. This is called **latent TB infection**. The inactive germs cannot be passed on to anyone else. For the other 10% of personnel infected the germ overcomes the immune system, and causes the person to become sick. This is called **Active TB or TB Disease**. People with **Active TB** may spread the germs to people they spend time with every day. People that take drugs or have medical conditions that suppress the immune system are more likely to develop Active TB.

What happens if I have a positive test?

If you have a positive test it is likely that you are infected. You will be asked to have a chest radiograph (X-ray) taken and will be interviewed by Preventive Medicine/Infection Control staff to screen for Active TB (disease). For people that do not have active TB, you will be offered a course of antibiotics that reduces the risk of developing active disease by over 90% - the current course of antibiotics is a 9 month course of Isoniazid (INH). You will be instructed to notify your healthcare provider if you ever develop symptoms of active TB.

What are the symptoms of TB Disease?

Cough that lasts over 3 weeks, coughing up blood-tinged phlegm (sputum), drenching sweats at night, unexplained fevers and chills, and weight loss are all symptoms of TB disease. However, these symptoms are found with many other medical conditions. If you develop symptoms let your medical provider know.

What happens if I develop TB disease?

TB disease is treatable with antibiotics. If you develop TB disease you have the potential to infect other people so you would be placed in isolation (either at home or a hospital) until you have taken the antibiotics long enough to not be infectious (several weeks). Typically the full treatment for active TB consists of 4 antibiotics for several weeks, followed by 2 antibiotics for a number of months.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact the MEDDAC Preventive Medicine Department at 719-526-7353 or the Infection Control Consultant at 719-526-7821.