

Tuberculosis

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is a bacterial disease that can attack any part of your body. It usually affects the lungs, but can affect lymph nodes, kidneys, bones, joints, and other parts of the body.

What are the symptoms of tuberculosis and how soon do they appear?

Symptoms include fever, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss and a persistent cough. Some people who are infected may not have symptoms. Most people infected with TB never develop active disease. If active TB does develop, it may occur two to three months after infection or years later.

How is it spread?

Tuberculosis is spread person to person through air. When an infected person who is not taking tuberculosis medication coughs or sneezes, the bacteria get into the air. Prolonged exposure is normally necessary for infection to occur.

When is an infected person contagious?

A person with active TB may remain contagious until he/she has been on appropriate treatment for several weeks. However, a person with latent TB infection who does not have symptoms of the disease cannot spread the infection to others.

What is the treatment?

People infected with TB should be evaluated for preventive therapy, which includes taking medication for 9 months. The exact preventive therapy plan must be determined by a physician. People with active TB must complete a course of curative therapy. Treatment includes an initial two-month phase followed by a continuing phase. Medications may be altered based on laboratory test results. The exact medication plan must be determined by a physician.

What is the difference between active tuberculosis and latent TB infection?

Infection may result after close contact with a person who has active pulmonary tuberculosis. A person with latent TB infection does not feel sick or have any symptoms, but they may develop the disease at a later date. Tuberculosis infection may last a lifetime, never developing into disease. The disease is characterized by appearance of symptoms. In order to spread the disease a person must have active pulmonary TB.

Where can I get more information?

<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/faqs/default.htm>

TB rates in Washington can be found at

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/nc/incidence/tuberculosis.pdf>