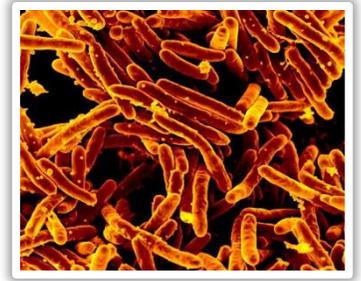




Tuberculosis (TB)

[Tuberculosis \(TB\)](#) is caused by a germ called Mycobacterium tuberculosis that is spread from person-to-person through the air. The TB bacteria usually attack the lungs, but can attack any part of the body such as the lymph nodes, kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. Symptoms of TB include: a bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer, pain in the chest, coughing up blood or sputum, weakness or fatigue, weight loss, no appetite, chills, fever, and sweating at night.



TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, [two TB-related conditions exist](#): latent TB infection and active TB disease.

Latent TB: TB bacteria can live in the body without making you sick. This is called latent TB infection. In most people who breathe in TB bacteria and become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria to stop them from growing. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms. People with latent TB infection are not infectious and cannot spread TB bacteria to others. However, if TB bacteria become active in the body and multiply, the person will go from having latent TB infection to being sick with TB disease. If you have latent TB infection but not TB disease, your health care provider may want you be treated to keep you from developing TB disease. Treatment of latent TB infection reduces the risk that TB infection will progress to TB disease. Treatment of latent TB infection is essential to controlling and eliminating TB in the United States. The decision about taking treatment for latent TB infection will be based on your chances of developing TB disease.

Active TB: TB bacteria become active if the immune system can't stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active (multiplying in your body), this is called TB disease. People with TB disease are sick. They may also be able to spread the bacteria to people they spend time with every day. For people whose immune systems are weak, especially those with HIV infection, the risk of developing TB disease is much higher than for people with normal immune systems. TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs, usually for 6 to 9 months. It is very important to finish the medicine, and take the drugs exactly as prescribed. If you stop taking the drugs too soon, you can become sick again. If you do not take the drugs correctly, the germs that are still alive may become resistant to those drugs. TB that is drug resistant is harder and more expensive to treat.

There are two kinds of tests that are used to detect TB bacteria in the body: [the TB skin test \(TST\) and TB blood tests](#). These tests can be given by a health care provider. If you have a positive reaction to either of the tests, you will be given other tests to see if you have latent TB infection or TB disease.