

TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

Reportable to local or state health department

**This fact sheet is for provider information only.
If you have questions, please call the health department.**

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection that usually affects the lungs, but can affect any part of the body. TB can be life-threatening, but it is curable with antibiotic medications.

CAUSE	<i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> bacteria.
SYMPTOMS	General symptoms of active TB disease may include feeling tired or sick, weight loss, fever, or night sweats. When active TB disease is in the lungs, there may be cough, chest pain, and possibly coughing up blood. Symptoms often develop gradually and worsen until treatment is started. If TB is elsewhere in the body, there may be other symptoms.
SPREAD	When someone with TB disease in their lungs coughs, sneezes, yells, or sings, tiny droplets with <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> are released into the air and another person breathes in these droplets. Most healthy people who become infected with TB bacteria develop latent TB infection and have no symptoms.
INCUBATION	It takes 2 to 12 weeks after exposure for infection to be detected by a tuberculin skin test (TST; also known as Mantoux or PPD). If an infected person develops active TB disease, symptoms can occur within a few weeks, months, or even years after infection.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	Only active TB disease of the lungs or voice box (larynx) is contagious. The contagious period varies from person to person, but usually from when the symptoms begin until the person has completed several weeks of adequate treatment. TB disease in other parts of the body is usually not contagious. Young children, who lack capacity to cough forcefully, typically are not as contagious as adults.
EXCLUSION	<u>Childcare</u> and <u>School</u> : Consult with your local or state health department. Each situation must be evaluated individually to determine whether the person is contagious and poses a risk to others. A person with a positive TST but without symptoms should <u>not</u> be excluded, but should see a healthcare provider as soon as possible after the positive test is detected for further evaluation and possible treatment for latent TB infection.
DIAGNOSIS	Tuberculosis is diagnosed based on signs and symptoms, physical exam, TST results, chest x-ray (if indicated), and laboratory exam of material obtained from cough specimens, other body fluids, or tissues.
TREATMENT	Active tuberculosis disease is treated with multiple antibiotic medications for a minimum of 6 months or as long as 2 years. Latent TB infection is usually treated with a single antibiotic medication for 9 months to prevent the development of active TB disease.

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PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Tuberculosis testing is not universally recommended for Minnesota children, including those attending childcare.
- Persons exposed to active, infectious TB disease should have a TST performed. If the first TST is negative, another TST may be needed to determine if infection has developed.

For more information, call the Hennepin County public health clinic at (612) 543-5555, call your local health department, or the Minnesota Department of Health TB Program at (651) 201-5414.