

Infection Prevention and Control

Tuberculosis



Information Leaflet

What is T.B?

TB stands for “Tuberculosis”. TB is a bacterium (germ) that can cause disease in various parts of the body. About 60% of cases affect the lungs - Pulmonary TB, but other areas can be involved e.g. joints and lymph nodes. People with “active TB” are often unwell with symptoms such as fever, weight loss, loss of energy and night sweats. Active pulmonary TB is infectious and the bacterium can be breathed in by others.

Latent TB Infection (LTBI)

Some people can be infected with the TB germ without being ill or infectious to others. The germ is “asleep” or latent.

Where does TB come from?

TB is found in people all over the world including the UK.

How did I get TB?

Most people develop TB by breathing in the germ. The TB can become active when a person’s immune system is low e.g. in older age or being unwell with another illness.

Are there any risks to the family or visitors?

Visitors should be kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of others becoming infected. Vulnerable or new contacts should not visit e.g. babies, children, people on certain drugs, e.g. cancer treatment or people who have not had recent, prolonged contact with the patient.

Are there any special precautions to take?

Yes. If it is suspected that you may have pulmonary TB you may be moved to a side room and asked to wear a face mask while other people are in your room or when you visit

departments such as X-ray. Staff or visitors may also be asked to wear masks.

If investigations find you are not infectious these precautions may be stopped.

Are visitors a risk to others?

Because there is a slight risk that someone else in your family may also have TB. Your visitors may be asked not to visit other areas of the hospital e.g. the Childrens' Ward and Maternity Unit. The hospital has a duty to protect other patients.

Can TB be treated?

Yes. A full cure can be expected by taking antibiotics for 6 months to a year. Progress and recovery is expected to be slow. You can go home and continue treatment at home.

Do we need to take special precautions at home?

Just a common sense approach to washing glasses, cutlery etc. The provision of tissues, hand washing equipment and covered waste paper baskets would be helpful. Avoid kissing for the first 14 days of treatment. Continue to restrict vulnerable visitors until the 14 days are up. Once you have had antibiotics for 14 days, you are considered to be non-infectious.

Do I need a special diet?

Avoid cheese, tuna and red wine whilst on TB medication. A high calorie and high protein diet is advised. Complementary drinks/meal replacements can be used to enhance weight gain.

Contact tracing

A TB nurse will discuss this first with you to identify contacts who may also have become infected. The household contacts will be contacted by the TB nurse and be invited for screening. This is done by a chest X-ray or by a Mantoux skin test.

Do I need to tell anyone?

There is usually no need to tell work or school. If screening of a workplace or school is thought to be necessary the TB nurse will inform you. No information regarding your diagnosis is given out without your consent.

The Health Protection Agency will be notified that you have TB and may contact you.

Extra information

- In female patients, the antibiotic Rifampicin stops all forms of hormonal contraception from working, particularly “the pill.” Barrier methods should be used for the duration of treatment.
- Urine, sweat and tears can become stained a red/orange colour. Avoid white clothing and bedding and do not wear soft contact lenses.
- Monitor vision during TB treatment for blurring. This can be done by ensuring small print can be read as normal on a daily basis.
- Avoid alcohol.

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please speak to your doctor, nurse or Infection Prevention staff.

Infection Prevention Team 01535 294848

Write any questions/queries below

The Public Health England website and will give further guidance and information: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on: 01535 294019 for advice.

Please raise any issue you may have about your care and treatment with a member of staff. Raising your concerns will not adversely affect the care you will receive.

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