

TB Prevention and Practices

1. TB is short for tuberculosis. TB is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB is a serious disease that can cause a person to become very sick if not treated with medicine. TB usually affects the lungs, but it sometimes affects other parts of the body.
2. Transmission: TB is spread through the air from one person to another. It is spread by the person with active TB disease by sneezing, coughing, talking. TB is not spread through kissing or sharing such items as eating or drinking utensils. People who have a lowered immune system, have certain chronic health problems, or abuse alcohol and drugs are at greater risk for getting TB.
3. Symptoms: Fatigue, insomnia, night sweats, persistent cough, bloody cough, weight loss.
4. Diagnosis: TB skin test, chest x-ray, sputum tests.
5. Active TB Disease or Latent TB Infection?
 - TB Infection: This person has been exposed and become infected to TB but has no symptoms and cannot spread the disease. This person will react positive to the TB skin test but chest x-ray and sputum cultures are negative. Many people who have TB infection never develop active disease. May need treatment to prevent active disease
 - Active TB Disease: This person has symptoms and can spread the disease. An abnormal chest x ray and positive sputum culture is present. Will need treatment for disease
6. Treatment: Isoniazid and several other drugs are prescribed for the patient with active TB. These must be taken as prescribed for a specified length of time, usually 6-12 months. After the patient has been on the medication for 6 weeks and has a negative sputum test, he may return to work.
7. Patient Contacts: The active TB patient's family, close friends, and co-workers must be tested.
8. Prevention Advice:
 - Cover mouth when coughing and avoid others that are coughing
 - Avoid poorly ventilated areas
 - Seek early treatment for symptoms
 - Follow Hospice policies for TB control.