

Tuberculosis

What is tuberculosis? Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious respiratory infection that is caused by a bacteria. The infection enters the lungs and causes:

- No symptoms at all -OR
- Persistent cough, pneumonia
- Fevers, weight loss, and fatigue
- And (rarely) infection of brain, heart, kidney, bones

Tuberculosis is particularly dangerous for:

- *Young children and the elderly*
- *People with health problems and weakened immunity (e.g., HIV/AIDS, cancer chemotherapy, organ transplant, steroid medications).*

How does tuberculosis spread? It spreads by:

- Being in a room together
- Coughing and sneezing

When is tuberculosis contagious?

- When the disease is "active" and the person is sick and coughing. Adults with TB are more contagious than children. The disease is contagious until after two to four weeks of taking TB medications, and tests confirm that it's no longer contagious.
- After exposure, a person may develop a positive TB skin test (infection) within two to 10 weeks. Although most people with TB never develop symptoms, they may develop symptoms from one month to many years later.

How do I know if my child has tuberculosis? If your child has been exposed or has symptoms, see your doctor. TB infection is diagnosed by a skin test on the forearm. If there is a reaction ("positive TB test") after two to three days, a chest X-ray and cultures are done to diagnose active TB infection and what treatment and follow-up are needed.

What should I do if my child has tuberculosis?

Treatment: Follow the treatment prescribed by your doctor:

- Oral antibiotic medications for six to 12 months.
- Close medical follow-up including X-rays and cultures.

Keep the child home: until the doctor and/or health department determine that he is not contagious. This may be up to two to four weeks. Notify your Head Start program immediately.

- To limit the spread:
- Test all children and caregivers for TB periodically.
- Report the illness to the local health department.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow and away from people. Open windows indoors and maximize outdoor play.