



What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is often called TB for short. TB is a serious but treatable infection, caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

TB is primarily a disease of the lungs but it can infect other parts of the body such as the brain or spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get treatment.

Someone with TB in the lungs and throat will be able to pass it on to other people when they cough or sneeze. However if that person begins treatment with antibiotics, after two weeks, they will no longer be able to pass TB on to others.

Facts About TB

The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 9 million people will become ill with TB each year and around a million and a half will die from the disease. In a single day around 3500 people die from TB.

Today the UK has some of the worst rates of TB infection in all of Western Europe. In 2013 there were 7892 new cases of tuberculosis, with London counting for 38% of these. London has one of the highest rates of TB in Western Europe, and the TB rate in Redbridge is higher than the London average.

What are the Symptoms of TB?

The symptoms of pulmonary TB:

- a cough that lasts for more than 2-3 weeks
- coughing up blood or sputum
- weakness or extreme tiredness
- loss of appetite or weight loss
- night sweats
- fever/high temperature.

The symptoms of TB can sometimes be confused with other illnesses. Symptoms can vary depending on which part of the body is affected. For example, a cough is a common symptom of TB in the lungs, but someone with TB in the kidneys may have backache.

How is TB Spread?

TB is spread from person to person through the air. When a person with infectious TB coughs or sneezes they propel small droplets with the germs into the air. These germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment.

People who breathe in the air containing these TB germs can become infected. TB is not spread through shared surfaces, shaking someone's hand, sharing toothbrushes, kissing or sharing cups and cutlery. Covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze can help stop the transmission of TB.

How is TB Cured?

If tests show you are ill with TB, you must be treated as soon as possible - you will feel better sooner and cut the risk of passing TB on. TB treatment will take at least six months but can last up to two years.

After a few weeks you may feel better, but if you don't finish treatment the TB will stay in your body, symptoms may come back and you may pass it on to others. Finishing treatment is the only way to cure TB completely.

Good News!

Over the past 17 years an estimated 56 million people have been successfully treated and 22 million lives have been saved through the World Health Organization's global TB strategy. The rate of new TB cases has been dropping worldwide for about a decade. However, TB remains a huge problem.

Test Your Knowledge

Do the 5-minute quiz at: www.surveymonkey.com/s/TBAware

Find Out More About TB

Go to *The Truth About TB* website: www.thetruthabouttb.org

TB treatment is free. If you are worried you or someone else might have TB symptoms, please see your GP or contact the BHR Chest Clinic Team on 020 8970 8123.

London Borough of

Redbridge



RedbridgeCVS



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TB