

Tuberculosis

Getting Healthy, Staying Healthy



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

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What is tuberculosis?

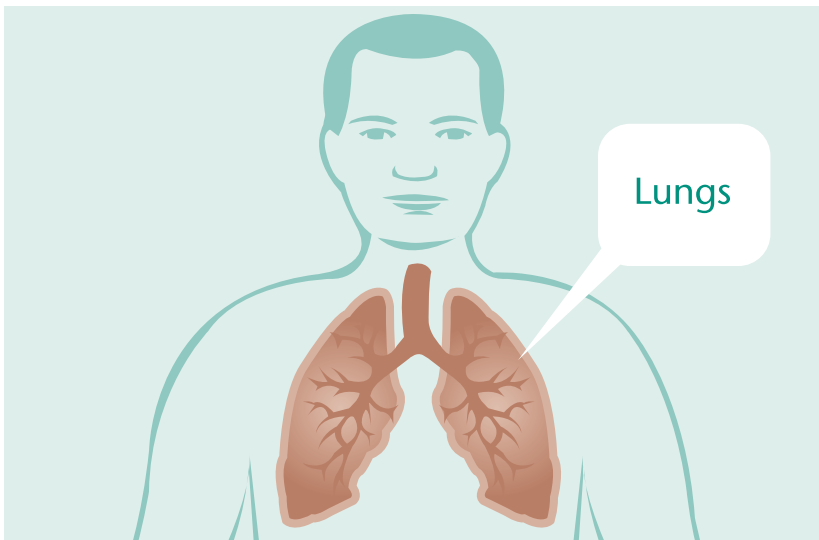
Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by a germ. You can get this germ from another person. The TB germ can invade your lungs and make you very sick.

The germ can do two things in your body

- ◆ It can sleep quietly without you noticing it (this is called a TB infection)
- ◆ Or it can wake up and make you sick (this is called TB disease)

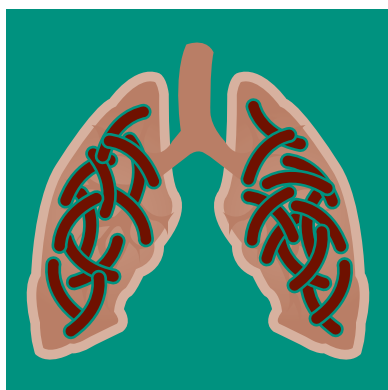
In addition, there are now two more serious types of TB disease.

- ◆ The first is called multidrug-resistant TB, or MDR TB. MDR TB is hard to treat because the two best medicines for TB don't get rid of the germ.
- ◆ The second is called extensively drug-resistant TB, or XDR TB. XDR TB is a rare kind of MDR TB that is very hard to treat. Most of the medicines used to get rid of the TB germ don't work very well.



What is TB infection?

TB infection means that the TB germ is asleep in your body. You have TB infection because someone with TB disease has given the TB germ to you.



TB infection can turn into TB disease if the germ wakes up. You can stop this from happening by taking medicines to get rid of the TB germs in your body.

Can I give TB infection to someone else?

No. You cannot spread the germ to others when you only have a TB infection.



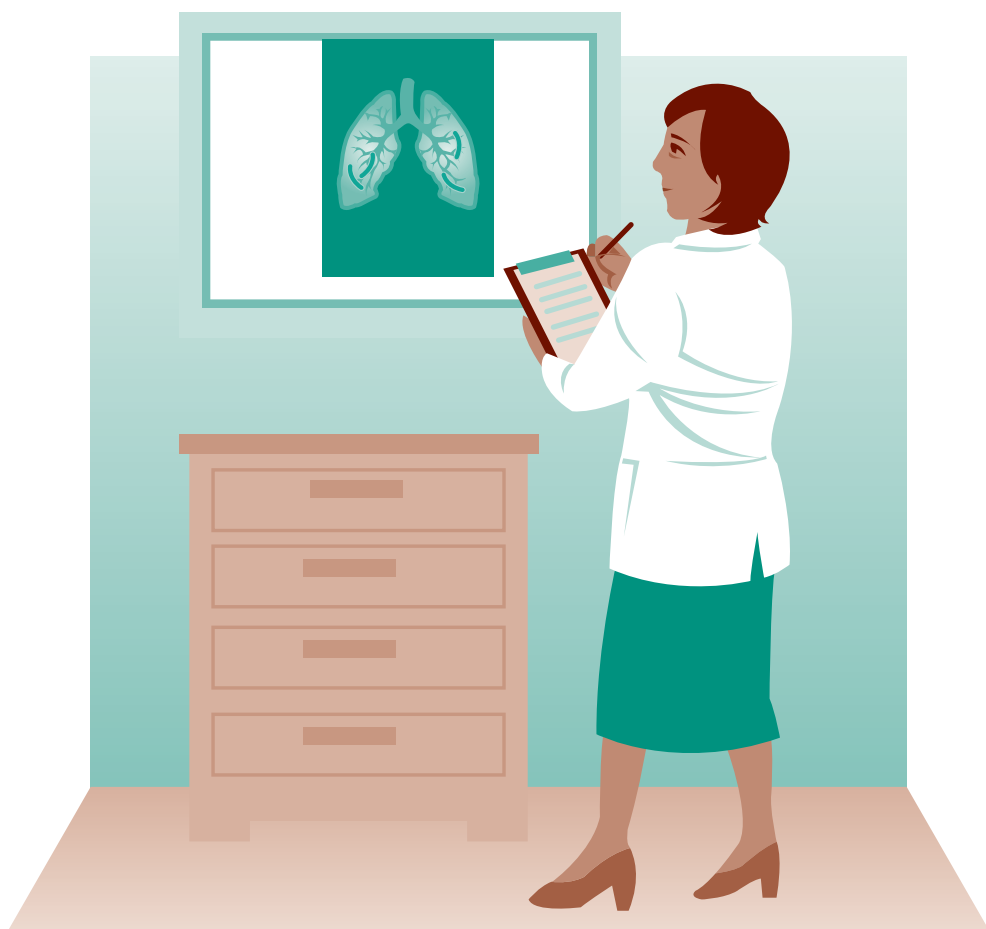
How can my doctor tell if I have TB infection?

Your doctor will do different tests to see whether you have TB infection in your body.

One is called a TB skin test (or PPD test). Your doctor will inject a drop of liquid in the skin on your arm. If you have the TB germ, you will get a skin bump after a few days. This skin bump will then go away.



Your doctor will also take a picture of your lungs with a chest X-ray. Your doctor will know that you have a sleeping TB germ in your body if you get a skin bump after your PPD test, but there are no spots or shadows on the X-ray of your lungs.



How does my doctor treat TB infection?

Your doctor may give you medicines called antibiotics. You will have to take these medicines for many months to make sure all the TB germs are gone from your body.

You have to take all your medicines until your doctor tells you that you are finished, even if the medicines make you feel sick.



You should eat well and get lots of rest while you are taking your medicines.

If you stop taking your medicines, the TB germs may stay in your body, wake up, and make you sick with TB disease.



When you are finished taking your medicines, the TB germ should be gone from your body. A PPD test may give you a skin bump because your body remembers that you have once been infected with the TB germ.

If the medicines did not work well and not all the germs are gone from your body, you could get sick with TB disease.



What is TB disease?

TB can become a disease in your body and your lungs when the TB germs wake up and become active to make you sick. You may have a fever, cough, lose weight, and have night sweats.



Can I give TB disease to someone else?

Yes. The TB germ can go through the air from your lungs to other people. To protect others from TB

- ◆ Cover your mouth when you speak, laugh, or cough.
- ◆ Do not go to school or work until your doctor tells you that you will no longer spread the germs.



How can my doctor tell if I have TB disease?

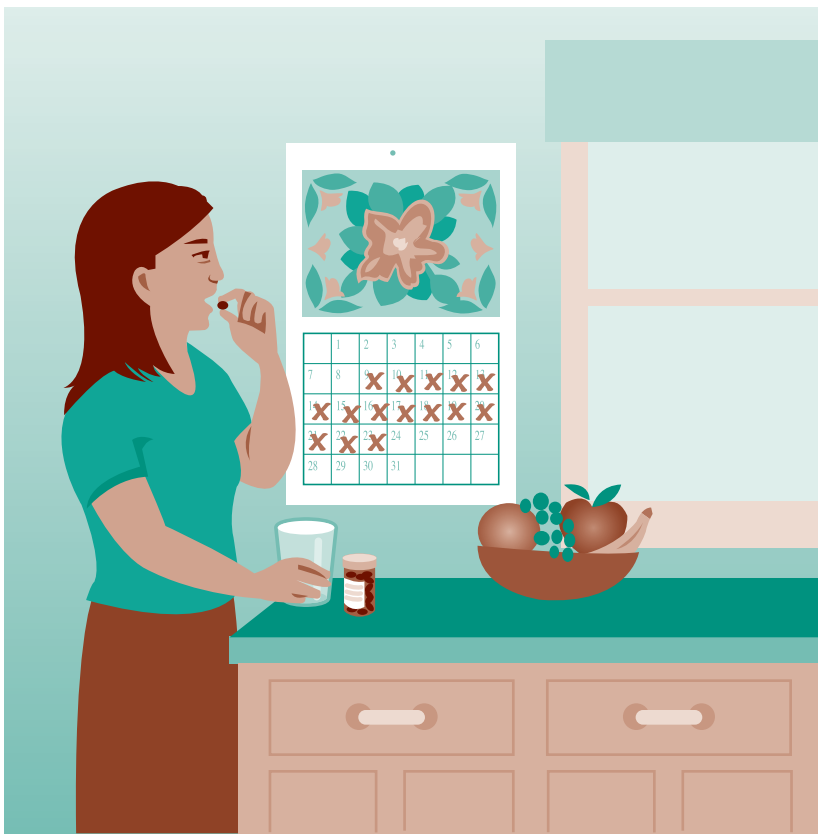
Your doctor will look at how sick you are. You will get a PPD test and an X-ray of your chest to look at your lungs.

Your doctor will know that you have TB disease if you get a skin bump after your PPD test **and** you have spots or shadows on the X-ray of your lungs.



How does my doctor treat TB disease?

Your doctor will give you medicines, called antibiotics, that may cure your TB. You will have to take different pills for many months to make sure all the TB germs are gone from your body.



Some kinds of TB disease are hard to treat with medicines. If you have a more serious TB illness, such as MDR TB or XDR TB, your doctor may give you different kinds of medicines that you will take for a longer period of time. It is very important that you take all your TB medicines.

You have to take your medicines until your doctor tells you that you are finished, even if the medicines make you feel sick. You may have to see a nurse who will give the medicine to you every day.



You should eat well and get lots of rest while you are taking your medicines.

If you do not take your medicine every day, the TB germs may not go away and you could get very sick or die from TB.



After you finish all your medicines, the TB germ should be gone. Because your body remembers that you have had the TB germ, a new PPD test may still give you a skin bump.

If the medicines did not kill all the TB germs, you could get TB disease again.

If you think you have TB disease again, you need to go to your doctor or clinic and say that you had TB before.



Where can I get more information?

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

6610 Rockledge Drive, MSC 6612
Bethesda, MD 20892
866-284-4107 or 301-496-5717
www.niaid.nih.gov

MedlinePlus

National Library of Medicine

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
888-FIND-NLM (888-346-3656) or 301-594-5983
www.medlineplus.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or 404-639-3534
www.cdc.gov

The American Lung Association

61 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10006
800-LUNGUSA (800-586-4872) or 800-548-8252
www.lungusa.org



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