

# Get the Facts About TB

-- And breathe easier



Resource ID: 6031

Get the Facts About TB/Informese Sobre La  
Tuberculosis

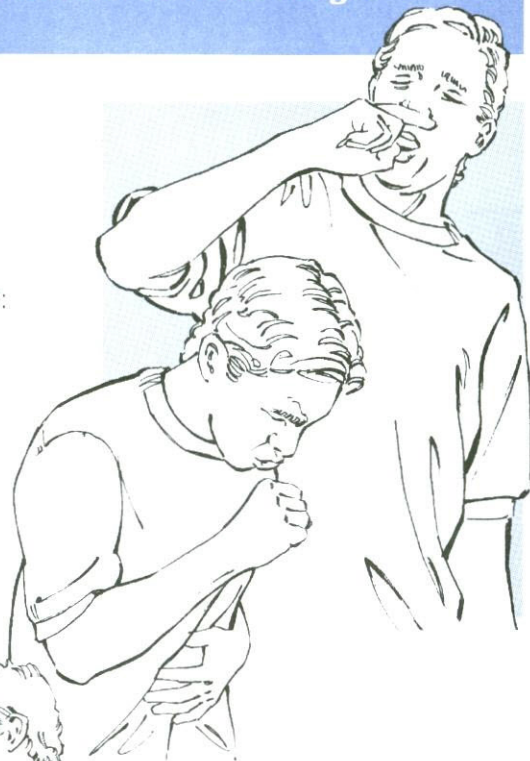
# What is TB?

It's tuberculosis -- a disease caused by tiny germs (bacteria) that are breathed into the lungs.

## TB germs get into the air

when someone who has TB:

- sneezes
- coughs
- laughs
- sings
- speaks.



## The most common way to get TB germs

is by spending a lot of time indoors with someone who has TB disease. (TB germs are not spread on dishes, drinking glasses or other objects.)



This booklet is not a substitute for an informed discussion between a patient and his or her health-care provider of the symptoms, diagnoses, procedures or medications described in this booklet.

# Why should I learn about TB?

Because you could have TB germs in your body and not even know it.

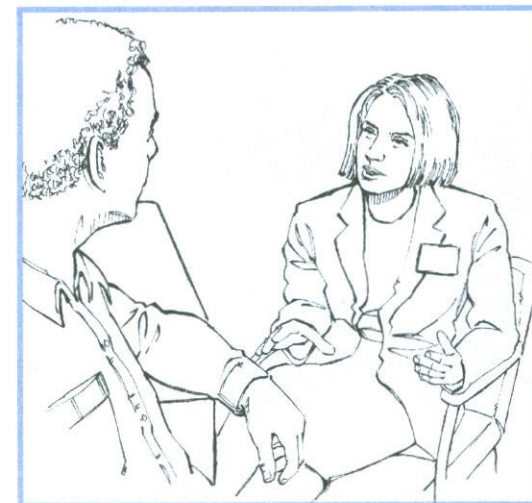


Millions of people have TB germs and don't feel sick.

## But, people with TB germs may need treatment

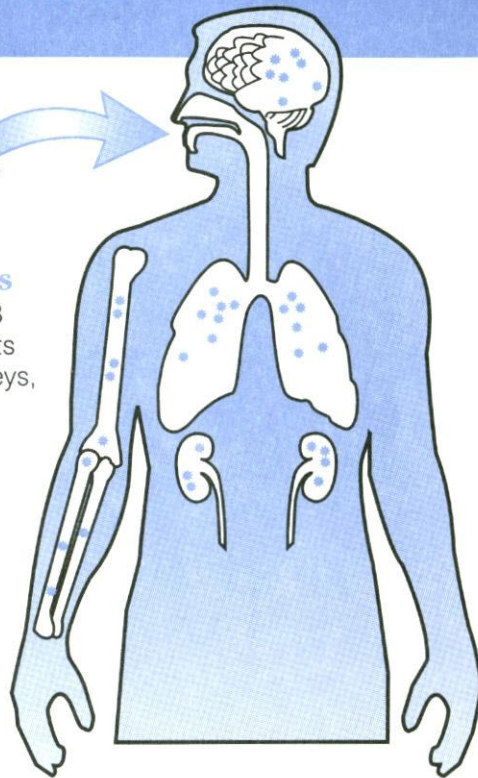
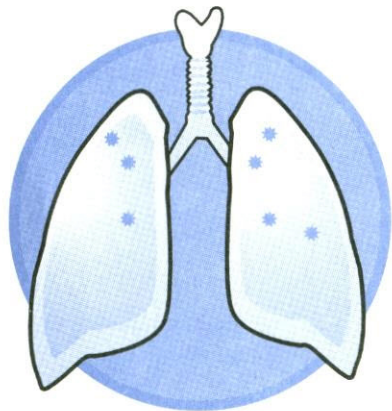
to keep from getting sick -- or even dying.

Treatment is the only way to beat TB.



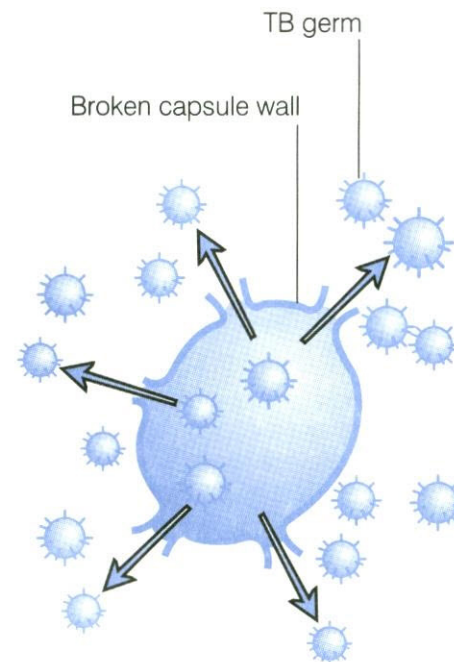
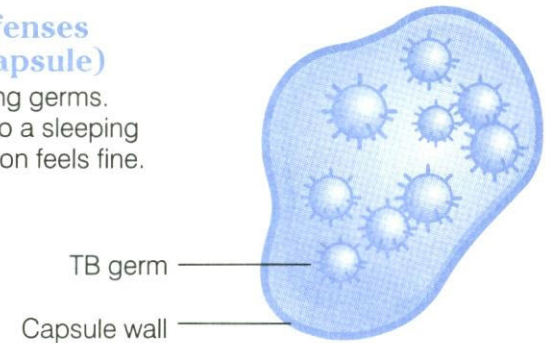
# How TB germs cause TB disease

**1. TB germs are breathed into the lungs** and start to multiply. Some TB germs may travel to other parts of the body, such as the kidneys, bones and brain. The person now has TB infection.



**2. The body fights back** but usually cannot kill all of the germs. (Some people may get very sick at this point, but most people do not.)

**3. The body's defenses build a wall (capsule)** around the remaining germs. These germs go into a sleeping stage, and the person feels fine.



**4. The germs may wake up,** break out of their capsules, and start to multiply. This may happen months or years after infection. It usually happens when the body is weak from fighting other infections and diseases, such as:

- infection with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)
- diabetes
- kidney disease
- pneumonia
- cancer.

When the TB germs break out of their capsules, the person has TB disease.

**Many people infected with TB never get TB disease.**

# TB infection and TB disease are different.

## A person with TB infection

has TB germs in his or her body, but:

- has no signs of illness
- cannot spread TB germs to others.

Treatment at this point can prevent TB germs from causing TB disease.



## A person with TB disease

has TB germs and:

- has signs of illness, which may include a cough, tiredness, weakness, fever, weight loss and spitting up blood
- can pass TB germs to others (unless the person with TB disease is taking medication to fight TB).

TB disease can cause serious illness and death, unless it is treated.



# Is there a test for TB?

A skin test can help show if there are TB germs in your body.



**Certain people should have the test,** including people who:

- are infected with HIV
- live or work in correctional institutions
- live or work in nursing homes or mental institutions
- work in health-care facilities
- live with, or are in close contact with, someone who has or may have TB
- have any signs of TB
- come to the U.S. from a country where a lot of people have TB
- use needles to inject (shoot) drugs.

# How the test is done

Testing for TB germs is simple.

A health-care professional:

## **Injects a harmless substance**

under the skin on your arm.  
(Do not scratch the skin where you were tested.)



## **Checks your skin 2 or 3 days later**

to see if there has been any swelling. It is very important that you return to have your skin test checked on the day you are told to!



## **Gives you the results**

of the test and tells you if you need other tests.

# What the test results mean

You may be told that your skin test is:

## **Negative, or not significant**

This means that you probably do not have TB germs in your body. You may need another skin test to make sure.

(If you have HIV, your health-care provider may want you to have other tests. The skin test doesn't always detect TB germs in people with HIV.)

## **Positive, or significant**

This means that you have TB infection -- TB germs got into your body at some time. A positive test result does not show that you have TB disease or that you can infect others.



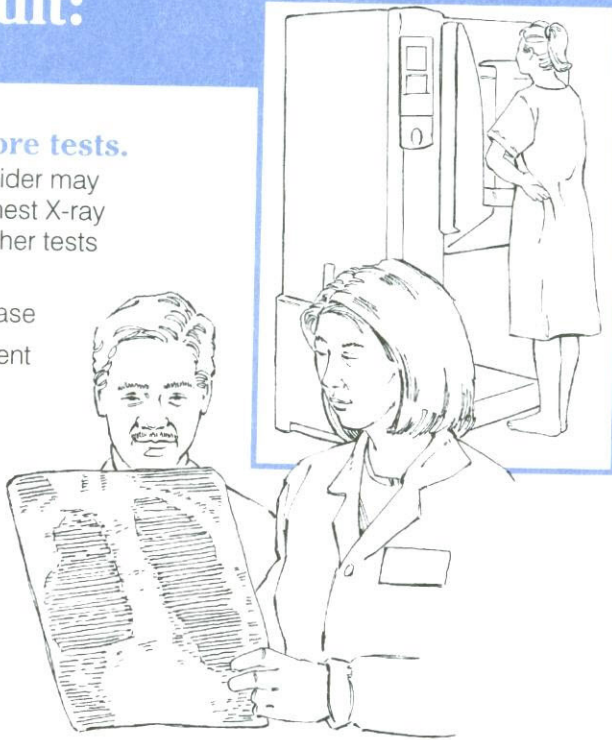
**Contact your health-care provider or health department if you have questions about the tests.**

## If you have a positive test result:

### You will have more tests.

Your health-care provider may want you to have a chest X-ray and possibly some other tests to see:

- if you have TB disease
- what kind of treatment you need.



### You may also need to have a test for HIV.

People with HIV have a greater risk of getting TB. If you have HIV, it's important to get counseling and treatment as soon as you can.

### You will need treatment.

Most people do not have to stay in the hospital. But, your health-care provider may recommend directly observed therapy (DOT). In DOT, a trained observer watches you take your medicine.



## Prescription drugs are the only way to treat TB.



The type of drugs used will depend on your condition:

- TB infection is usually treated with a drug called INH.
- TB disease is usually treated with INH plus other drugs. In most cases, the drugs are able to get rid of TB germs in your body.

### Be sure to tell your health-care provider

if you are taking any other drugs -- especially HIV drugs called protease inhibitors. Taking certain drugs together may reduce their effectiveness and may even be harmful.

### Drugs can have side effects

-- tell your health-care provider right away if you:

- feel very tired
- have an upset stomach
- do not feel like eating
- have a rash, yellow skin or eyes, or dark-colored urine
- feel sick in any way.



# Follow instructions for taking your medication.

And, take it for as long as your health-care provider says.

## Take your medicine even when you feel fine.

TB germs can be tricky. Treating TB can take months. Just because you feel OK does not mean all of the germs are dead.



## Go for all checkups.

Your health-care provider needs to see if the drugs are working. He or she will tell you when to come for checkups.

### If you don't take all your medicine

exactly as you are told to, the TB germs could:

- get stronger and make you very sick
- become drug-resistant, making treatment difficult -- or impossible in some cases
- take longer to fight
- be more likely to infect others.



**Talk with your health-care provider if you have any questions about your TB drug(s).**

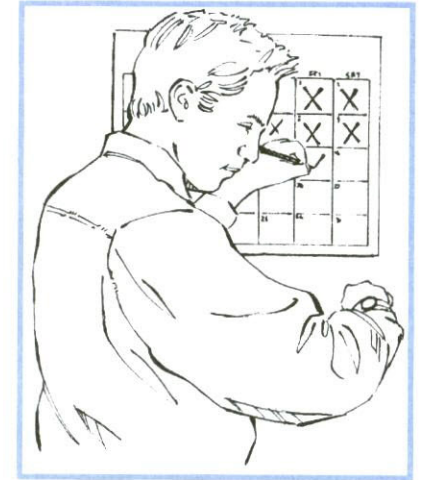
# Tips to help you remember to take your medicine:\*

## Take it at the same time each day.

For example, you could take your medicine after brushing your teeth each morning or just before going to bed each night.

## Use a calendar.

When you take your medicine, mark off that day on the calendar.

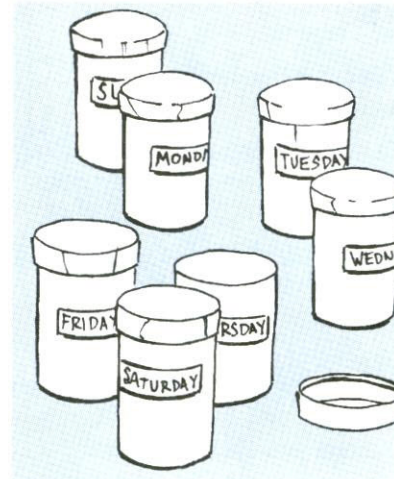


## Use containers.

1. Find 7 small pill bottles or other containers. (Remove any old labels.)
2. Mark 1 day of the week on each container.
3. On Sunday, fill each container with the medicine you must take each day of the week.

When the container is empty, you will know you have taken your medicine for that day.

Store all medicine out of the reach of children, in containers that are hard for them to open. Consult a health-care provider or pharmacist before combining different medicines in a container.



\*If you live in a correctional institution or nursing home, your medication may be provided to you daily.

# More about TB and HIV

## HIV weakens the body

-- this makes it easier for someone with HIV to get TB. A person with HIV could:

- develop TB disease from an old infection
- become sick with a new TB infection.



## TB may be harder to detect

in a person with HIV because:

- skin tests may be negative even though TB is present
- signs of TB may be similar to signs of HIV infection.

## If you have HIV

(or think you might have it), be sure to tell your health-care provider. When detected early, TB is one of the most treatable HIV-related illnesses. You can also discuss ways to manage HIV.

## Protect yourself from HIV:

- Don't use drugs. If you do, never share needles or syringes. And, get help to stop.
- Know that HIV is spread during anal, oral and vaginal sex. Not having sex is safest.
- Always use a latex condom properly if you do have sex. Used properly, a latex condom helps protect you and your partner.

**Contact your health-care provider or health department if you have questions about infection with TB or HIV.**

# TB is a serious illness.

## Get tested

if you think you might have TB germs in your body.



**Follow your health-care provider's instructions for taking any TB drugs.**



**You can fight TB -- and win!**