

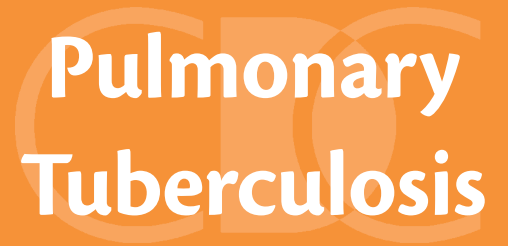
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Pulmonary Tuberculosis



BC Centre for Disease Control

Pulmonary Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (*M. tuberculosis* for short).

- Tuberculosis occurs when an individual gets infected by the *M. tuberculosis* germ.
- The infection usually occurs when a person breathes in the *M. tuberculosis* germ from another person.
- Not all people infected by the *M. tuberculosis* germ get the disease from the infection.
- When an infection with *M. tuberculosis* occurs most people do not realize it at the time.
- For many people no further problems occur but the *M. tuberculosis* germ can remain sleeping in the body and become active at a later time. There is no way of predicting what will happen in each individual.
- When the *M. tuberculosis* germ becomes active it can produce disease and poor health.

One of the most common places in the body that the *M. tuberculosis* germ becomes active is in the lungs.

If the *M. tuberculosis* germ becomes active in the lungs most people experience symptoms.

Possible symptoms include:

- cough
- sputum
- coughing up blood
- fever
- night sweats
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- fatigue

Some people, but not all people, who have active disease in the lungs can pass the infection to others. The infection can be passed to others if the sputum contain the *M. tuberculosis* germs. For this reason, the following is done:

- Provide sputum samples as soon as possible.
- Wear a mask when around other people.
- Refrain from close contact with people.
- Make a list of family and friends that you have been in contact with so that they can be tested for infection or disease.
- Immediate treatment starts the process that will kill the germs and make you no longer able to spread the disease to others.
- The sputum is checked regularly after starting treatment to find out if the *M. tuberculosis* germ is gone. When the germ is no longer present in 3 sputum samples obtained once daily for 3 days, then the mask can be removed and the person allowed to socialize as before.