

## Simple facts about tuberculosis (TB)

**It is time to forget the way of thinking that tuberculosis (TB) is somewhere far away or someone else's problem.** TB is a disease like any other – it does not depend on person's gender or age, education or income. People with TB are in every country and on every continent; they are from every nationality and race. Among TB patients are old and young people, long and short ones. Some are highly educated, but some are illiterate. Some are rich, yet some are poor.

Many of us think that TB has become a disease that does not really exist anymore and therefore should not be feared. There are also people who think that TB only affects those who are less fortunate and live in poorer conditions. None of those assumptions is true. Tuberculosis still endangers all of us. Among TB patients are pupils, students, public officials, accountants, plumbers, medical workers, IT-specialists, salesmen, soldiers etc.

According to the latest report from World Health Organization approximately 9 million people have active TB disease every year. Each day around 1000 persons get TB in Europe.

**Anyone can get tuberculosis!**

## What is tuberculosis?

TB is an infectious disease that is spread from person to person through the air. TB is caused by bacteria that usually affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body.

The most important and effective way to prevent TB spreading is to diagnose people with the disease as soon as possible and make sure they have a full course of correct treatment. That is why it is so important to know about the disease and act on the knowledge.

**Tuberculosis is curable if treated in time!**

## How tuberculosis spreads?

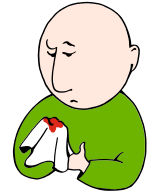
When a TB patient coughs, sneezes, spits or laughs, the TB bacteria can get into the air. These bacteria can stay in the air for a period of time particularly in an enclosed environment. Other people breathe in these bacteria and can catch TB.

**Anyone sharing the same breathing space as a person with active pulmonary tuberculosis is at risk!**

## What are the symptoms of tuberculosis?



a cough that lasts for over three weeks



coughing up blood or sputum



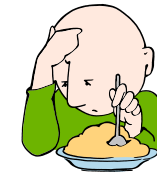
sweating at night



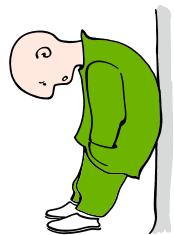
fever, chills



weight loss



loss of appetite



feeling weak or tired

**If you have any symptoms that indicate tuberculosis, you should go to a doctor! Do not hesitate!**

If you are not experiencing any of these symptoms but a person close to you is, advise him to go to doctor. Support him or her in seeking TB treatment, when necessary.

## Risk factors

Although anyone can get TB, some people are more at risk than others. Among them are:

- Close contacts of a person with infectious TB disease
- People who have previously had TB
- People who drink alcohol on more than four days a week
- People who use drugs, especially inject drugs
- People who have weaker immune system, including people with any of these conditions:
  - HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS)
  - Diabetes
  - Severe kidney disease
  - Low body weight
  - Silicosis
  - Medical treatments such as chemotherapy, corticosteroids or immunosuppressive therapy
  - Specialized treatment for rheumatoid arthritis or Crohn's disease

**If you have even the smallest doubt that you might have tuberculosis, get tested. It is the only way to be in control of your life and health.**

## How is tuberculosis disease treated?

In most cases TB is curable, especially if treatment is started early and full course of TB medication is completed. Treatment is usually a mixture of special antibiotics and takes at least six months.

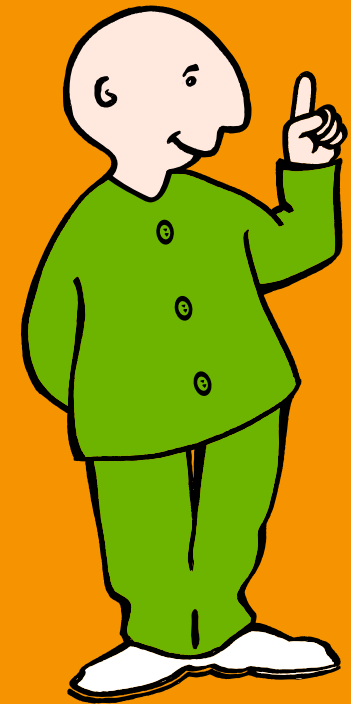
- Treatment for TB is free for everyone!
- If TB is not treated properly, it may lead to death!

**The sooner you are treated, the less likely you are to become more seriously ill or to pass tuberculosis on to others!**

## Do you know that:

- TB bacteria get into the air when a TB patient coughs, sneezes, spits or laughs
- 1 coughing fit = 5 minutes of talking
- One untreated person with TB can infect 15-20 people in a year
- TB does not spread when shaking hands, using same dishes or bathroom as the TB patient

More information you can find:



**Anyone can get tuberculosis**

tubidu



Publisher:

 **Tervise Arengu Instituut**  
National Institute for Health Development