

Tuberculosis (TB)

What is it?

The following information has been derived from the Health Files produced by the Ministry of Health. For more information [click here](#).

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by TB bacteria. TB bacteria are spread through the air when someone who is sick with a contagious type of TB disease coughs or sneezes. Anyone who is nearby when this happens is at risk for breathing in TB bacteria, and possibly becoming sick with TB disease.

Most commonly, TB bacteria cause disease in our lungs, but TB can also affect any other part of the body. Generally, lung and throat TB are the only contagious forms of the disease.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of TB disease may include weight loss, loss of appetite, fatigue, fever and night sweats.

When TB disease is affecting the lungs, there may also be cough, chest pain and shortness of breath.

If the TB disease is in other parts of the body, the symptoms will vary according to where it is happening.

How do I find out if I have the disease?

There are three main tests used to diagnose TB.

1. Tuberculin (Mantoux) Skin Testing:

This is a two-part test. The first part of the test involves having a small amount of a harmless test substance placed just under the skin on your forearm. This is nearly painless and takes only a few minutes to do. The second part of the test is done two or three days later, when the test area is checked for any swelling.

For more information, please check the Health Files within the resource section, under Tuberculosis (TB) Skin Test.

2. Chest X-ray:

Chest x-rays are very helpful to diagnose TB disease of the lungs. Chest x-rays have very little radiation associated with them however, pregnant women should only have this done if approved by their physician.

3. Sputum (spit) or other sample testing:

The very best way to find TB germs is to look for them under the microscope. People who have symptoms of TB disease are asked to provide samples of sputum (spit), urine, or other body fluids to be examined for TB germs. The results of these tests may take several weeks to be confirmed.

TB testing is provided FREE OF CHARGE for anyone with symptoms of the disease.

Is there a treatment available?

Yes! TB can be cured with medications, and these are provided FREE OF CHARGE to anyone who needs them through the Vancouver Island Health Authority TB Clinic.

Treatment of TB disease generally takes between six and nine months.

Where can I get more information?

Vancouver Island Health Authority TB Clinic

1902 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8R 1J7

Phone: (250) 952-4217

Fax: (250) 952-4215

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