

# Tuberculosis: General Information Sheet

## What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB- related conditions exist: latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

## What are the symptoms of TB?

Symptoms of TB disease depend on where in the body the TB bacteria are growing. TB bacteria usually grow in the lungs (pulmonary TB). TB disease in the lungs may cause symptoms such as a bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer; pain in the chest; coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs). Other symptoms of TB disease are weakness or fatigue, weight loss, no appetite, chills, fever, and sweating at night. Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected. People who have latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not have any symptoms, and cannot spread TB to others.

## How is TB Spread?

TB germs are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks or sings. It is important to know that a person who is exposed to TB bacteria is not able to spread the bacteria to other people right away. Only persons with active TB disease can spread TB bacteria to others. Before you would be able to spread TB to others, you would have to breathe in TB bacteria and become infected. Then the active bacteria would have to multiply in your body and cause active TB disease. At this point, you could possibly spread TB bacteria to others. People with TB disease are most likely to spread the bacteria to people they spend time with every day, such as family members, friends, coworkers, or schoolmates. Some people develop TB disease soon (within weeks) after becoming infected, before their immune system can fight the TB bacteria. Other people may get sick years later, when their immune system becomes weak for another reason. Many people with TB infection never develop TB disease.

## What is the Difference between Latent TB Infection (LTBI) and TB Disease?

TB bacteria can live in the body without making you sick. This is called latent TB infection. In most people who breathe in TB bacteria and become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria to stop them from growing. People with latent TB infection have no symptoms, don't feel sick, can't spread TB bacteria to others, usually have a positive TB skin test reaction or positive TB blood test, and may develop TB disease if they do not receive treatment for latent TB infection.

TB bacteria become active if the immune system can't stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active (multiplying in your body), this is called TB disease. People with TB disease are sick. They may also be able to spread the bacteria to people they spend time with every day. Many people who have latent TB infection never develop TB disease. Some people develop TB disease soon after becoming infected (within weeks) before their immune system can fight the TB bacteria. Other people may get sick years later when their immune system becomes weak for another reason. For people whose immune systems are weak, especially those with HIV infection, the risk of developing TB disease is much higher than for people with normal immune systems.

## What Should I do if I think I Have TB Disease or Show Signs/Symptoms of TB Disease?

If you think you have TB Disease or have a history of LTBI and are exhibiting signs/symptoms listed above, you must contact OHS immediately.

## What Should I do if I Have Spent time with Someone with Latent TB Infection (LTBI)?

A person with LTBI cannot spread germs to other people. You do not need to be tested if you have spent time with someone with latent TB infection. However, if you have spent time with someone with TB disease or someone with symptoms of TB, you should contact OHS immediately.

## What Should I do if I Have Been exposed to someone with TB Disease?

People with TB disease are most likely to spread the germs to people they spend time with every day, such as family members or coworkers. If you have been around someone who has TB disease, you should contact OHS immediately.

## How Do You Get Tested for TB?

There are two kinds of tests used to detect TB bacteria in the body: the TB skin test (TST) and TB blood tests. A positive TB skin test or TB blood test only tells that a person has been infected with TB bacteria. It does not tell whether the person has latent TB infection (LTBI) or has progressed to TB disease. Other tests, such as a chest x-ray and a sample of sputum, are needed to see whether the person has TB disease.

Information retrieved and modified from the CDC. Gov/TB website.

## Tuberculosis

|   |   |                   |            |                  |
|---|---|-------------------|------------|------------------|
| <b>NAME</b>   |   | <b>EMPLID ID:</b> |            | <b>SEMESTER:</b> |
| <b>Tuberculosis Screening Questionnaire</b><br><b>Statement of Disclosure</b>   |   |                   |            |                  |
| <b>To be completed by Student/Faculty</b>   |   |                   |            |                  |
|   | <b>Read each of the following questions and mark your answers. If "YES", explain.</b>                         | <b>NO</b>         | <b>YES</b> | <b>EXPLAIN</b>   |
|   | In the past year, have you been in close proximity to a person who has been diagnosed with Tuberculosis / TB? |                   |            |                  |
|   | In the past year, have you had unexplained night sweats?  |                   |            |                  |
|   | In the past year, have you had prolonged fever?   |                   |            |                  |
|   | In the past year, have you had a cough for more than two weeks?   |                   |            |                  |
|   | In the past year, have you had unexplained / unusual weight loss?   |                   |            |                  |
|   | Have you ever taken TB medication (e.g. INH, Rifampin)?   |                   |            |                  |
|   | Did you have a CXR / Chest X-Ray? Date:   |                   |            |                  |
| <p>I attest that I have received the Tuberculosis: General Information Sheet and certify that the information contained on this Tuberculosis questionnaire is true and accurate.</p> <p>I hereby understand that if any of the above responses are "Yes" that I will be required to provide a clearance letter from my healthcare provider to rule out the presence of active tuberculosis.</p> |   |                   |            |                  |
| Student/Faculty Signature:  |   |                   | Date:      |                  |