

Tuberculosis

Definition: 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. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

Transmission: TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. TB is NOT spread by

- shaking someone's hand
- sharing food or drink
- touching bed linens or toilet seats
- sharing toothbrushes
- kissing

Symptoms:

- a bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- pain in the chest
- coughing up blood or sputum
- weakness or fatigue
- weight loss
- no appetite
- chills
- fever
- sweating at night

Precautions and PPE considerations: Since TB is transmitted by droplets respiratory protection should be used on the provider and the patient. Also consider all exhaust fans and open any windows.

Treatments: TB bacteria become active (multiplying in the body) if the immune system can't stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active, this is called [TB disease](#). TB disease will make a person sick. People with TB disease may spread the bacteria to people with whom they spend many hours.

TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs for 6 to 9 months. There are 10 drugs currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treating TB. Of the approved drugs, the first-line anti-TB agents that form the core of treatment regimens include:

- isoniazid (INH)
- rifampin (RIF)
- ethambutol (EMB)
- pyrazinamide (PZA)

Regimens for treating TB disease have an initial phase of 2 months, followed by a choice of several options for the *continuation phase* of either 4 or 7 months (total of 6 to 9 months for treatment).

Work Guidelines: If an exposure occurs you will consult with the infectious disease doctor.