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TUBERCULOSIS DISEASE

What is TB Disease?

When the immune system becomes weak, TB germs can become active. They grow, spread and destroy tissue in the body. Some people become sick with TB shortly after being infected with TB germs, while others may not get sick until many years later.

TB disease can develop anywhere in the body, such as in the lungs, pleura, throat, lymph nodes, kidneys, bones, brain, spinal cord and abdomen. People with active TB usually have symptoms and feel sick. They are given medicine to treat and cure the TB disease. They take the medicine for six to 12 months or longer.

What Are the Symptoms of Active TB Disease?

The *most common symptoms* of active TB disease include:

- fever, chills
- weight loss, loss of appetite
- weakness, fatigue
- night sweats

People with ***TB in the lungs, pleura or in the throat*** may also:

- have a new or worsening cough lasting three weeks or longer
- cough up sputum or blood
- have chest pain

People with ***TB outside the lungs*** may have:

- unexplained pain that won't go away, such as in the bones, joints, abdomen, back
- a lump, often on the side of the neck
- swelling in bones or joints
- headaches, stiff neck, dizziness

People with ***TB disease in their lungs, pleura or throat*** are contagious and can spread TB germs to others when they cough, sneeze, speak, laugh, sing or play a wind instrument. Special precautions are required to prevent spreading TB germs to others. The Public Health Nurse will teach you about the precautions that must be taken and for how long.

TB outside the lungs is usually not contagious and cannot be spread to others because the TB germs cannot get into the air to be breathed in by other people. Usually no special precautions are required.