

## Recovery

If you have TB Disease of the lungs or throat you will need to isolate. After a few weeks of taking medication you can stop isolating and return to your usual daily activities. As long as you take the medication as instructed you won't risk passing on the disease to others.

If you have TB Disease in other parts of your body, or you have Latent TB Infection, you do not need to isolate and you can continue with your usual daily activities. You just need to take your medication as instructed by your Public Health Nurse.

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## Close contacts

People who have been in close contact with someone with TB Disease of the lungs or throat may be at risk of catching the disease. A public health professional will get in touch with you if you need to get tested.

### Testing for close contacts

The TB test is free for people referred by a public health professional.

The test varies depending on someone's age:

- Young children have a Mantoux test. This involves receiving a small injection, which is then checked three days later.
- Older children and adults have a blood test, called Quantiferon.

After your test you will receive further information from the Public Health Nurse on what you need to do next.

## For more information

### Tuberculosis (TB) - RPH:

<https://www.rph.org.nz/public-health-topics/illness-and-disease/tuberculosis-tb/>

### BCG vaccination - RPH:

<https://www.rph.org.nz/health-professionals/immunisation/>

### Tuberculosis (TB) - Health Navigator:

[www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/t/tuberculosis](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/t/tuberculosis)

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

Public Health Wellington Region  
(04) 570 9002



**Tuberculosis**  
**(TB)**

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

**TB is a serious disease that can spread from person to person.**

**While it can make some people very sick, it is also treatable and can be cured.**

## Types of TB

**Not everyone who breathes in TB germs becomes unwell or infectious, as everyone's immune system (which is your body's defenses) responds in different ways.**

### Latent TB Infection

Some people's bodies can control the TB germs and put them to 'sleep'. If this happens your body hasn't destroyed the TB germs, but they can't make you sick and you won't be infectious to others. This is called Latent TB Infection. Around 3 in 10 people who breathe in the TB germ develop Latent TB Infection.

### TB Disease

Some people who breathe in the TB germ cannot control the TB germ and become sick. This is called TB Disease.

You may also develop TB Disease if you have Latent TB Infection and your immune system is weakened allowing the TB germs to 'wake up'.

If the TB germs infect your lungs or your throat then you could pass on the TB germs to others.

If the TB germs infect other parts of your body, but not your lungs or throat, you cannot make other people sick from TB. All types of TB Disease require treatment.

## How TB spreads

You can only catch TB from someone who has TB Disease of the lungs or throat. They can spread the germs when they cough, sneeze or sing near others.

TB is not easily spread and it takes hours of close contact to catch it from someone who has TB Disease. This means people living in the same home as someone with TB Disease are most at risk of catching it.

## Symptoms

If you have **TB Disease** you may experience:

- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Sweating (especially at night)
- Feeling weak or tired all the time
- Have swollen neck glands
- Pain in parts of their body that are infected

If the **TB Disease is in your lungs or throat** you may also:

- Have an ongoing cough for three weeks or more
- Cough or spit up blood
- Experience chest pains or shortness of breath

If you have **Latent TB Infection** you will not have any symptoms.

**If you need medical advice contact your doctor, or call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.**

## People at higher risk of developing TB Disease

People are more at risk of developing TB Disease if they have a weak immune system. This may include:

- Babies and young children
- Other adults
- People with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, kidney failure, cancer or HIV
- People taking immune suppressing medication
- People who smoke or live with alcoholism

## Treatments

TB can be treated through taking special antibiotics that kill the TB germ. These are free for anyone living in New Zealand. A Public Health Nurse will provide these for you, explain how to take them, and check in with you regularly. You will also have regular appointments with a TB health specialist.

You must take all your medication to kill the TB germs. If you consistently skip taking your medication then the TB germs can become resistant. This makes it harder to treat and you can get sick again.

## Vaccination

In New Zealand a TB vaccine is available for free to babies and young children under five who are at higher risk of catching TB. This is called the BCG vaccine. It protects young children against some of the most dangerous forms of the disease. To learn more visit: <https://www.rph.org.nz/health-professionals/immunisation/>