

## **Tuberculosis, patient information**

### **County Medical Officers' infection prevention sheet**

#### **Why are you getting this information?**

You have or it is suspected that you have the disease tuberculosis, and you need treatment. This sheet contains information about tuberculosis, how the disease is cured and what you need to do.

#### **What is tuberculosis?**

Tuberculosis (also called TBC or TB) is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It often causes pneumonia, but other parts of the body, such as lymph nodes, pleural cavity, skeleton, brain or kidneys, can also be affected. Symptoms of the disease often manifest a long time (months or years) after infection. In young children or people with impaired immune systems, the disease can develop faster and sometimes become very serious.

#### **How does tuberculosis infect?**

The disease infects from people with tuberculosis of the lungs. The bacteria can spread through the air indoors when coughing and another person inhales the small droplets with bacteria. Tuberculosis is transmitted mainly during close and prolonged contact with the sick person. Therefore, most often people in the same household are exposed to infection. Parents can infect their children, and even close friends can get infected. It is less common for someone to get infected during contacts for a shorter period of time or occasional meetings, for example at the workplace or at school.

#### **How does it feel to have tuberculosis?**

Common complaints include weight loss, coughing lasting more than 3 weeks, night sweats and fever. The complaints depend on where in the body the tuberculosis bacteria are located. Other problems may be swelling (tuberculosis of the glands) or pain (tuberculosis of the skeleton or abdomen). Symptoms of tuberculosis can differ between different people depending on how long they have been ill – from almost no complaints to a very serious illness.

#### **How contagious is tuberculosis?**

People with pulmonary tuberculosis, where bacteria can be found in coughed up mucus, can be very contagious before treatment has begun. Contagiousness decreases rapidly already in the first weeks of treatment. People who have tuberculosis outside the lungs are not contagious. Young children with tuberculosis are almost never contagious. Tuberculosis is not transmitted through clothing or other objects. The disease is rarely contagious outdoors.

#### **Is tuberculosis dangerous?**

If tuberculosis is not treated, the bacteria can spread and attack other organs. Untreated tuberculosis can lead to serious injuries and sometimes even become life-threatening. Young children and people with impaired immune systems are particularly at risk of becoming seriously ill with tuberculosis.

#### **How is tuberculosis cured?**

Tuberculosis is treated with medicinal products that kill the bacteria causing the disease. It is a long treatment, lasting for many months. It is very important to adhere to the treatment prescribed by your doctor. Some medicinal products must be taken on an empty stomach (often one hour before breakfast). It is also important not to miss any tablets in the treatment.

Please follow your doctor's instructions. If the treatment is not taken regularly, the bacteria can become resistant, and the disease will therefore be more difficult to treat. Medicines for tuberculosis are free of charge, as are follow-up healthcare visits.

### Contact tracing – what does that mean?

It is very important to trace people who have tuberculosis so that they can get treatment, partly to reduce the risk of injury (see above) and partly so that the infection does not spread to others. You who have tuberculosis must therefore tell us who you have lived close to or met and who you may have infected, or who may have infected you. A person may be infected but need not be sick.

### Tuberculosis is part of the Communicable Diseases Act – what does this mean?

When you have tuberculosis, you need to live so that you do not risk infecting anyone else.

You who have, or are suspected of having tuberculosis, **must follow the precautions** received from your doctor:

- You who have contagious tuberculosis,
  - may be required to be treated in hospital for a period
  - may not go to work, school or extracurricular activities until your treatment has made you non-contagious and your doctor says that you can no longer infect other people.
- You must return for visits if your doctor tells you to do so.
- If you move, you must notify your doctor of this.
- You must participate in contact tracing

If you have been told to take a precaution that you think is wrong, you can contact the infectious disease doctor in your region.

### Do you want to know more?

More information about tuberculosis is available on

[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)

[www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se](http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se)

### Contact information (Kontaktuppgifter)

Name of clinic (*Namn på mottagningen*)

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You have been seen by (*Du har träffat*)

..... Doctor (*Läkare*)

..... Nurse (*Sjuksköterska*)

Telephone number/telephone hours of the clinic (*Telefonnummer/telefonid till mottagningen*)

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