

Tuberculosis

Patient information from the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers.

Why have I received this information?

You have or are suspected of having tuberculosis, and need treatment. This information sheet tells you about tuberculosis, how the disease is treated and what you need to do.

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (also called TB) is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Symptoms of the disease often appear a long time (months or years) after the initial infection. While patients often develop pneumonia, other parts of the body can also be affected, such as the lymph nodes, the pleura, the skeleton, the brain or the kidneys.

How is tuberculosis transmitted?

The disease is transmitted by people who have tuberculosis of the lungs. The bacteria can spread through the air indoors when a sick person coughs and another person inhales the small droplets containing the bacteria. Tuberculosis is mostly transmitted by close and prolonged contact. It is less common for someone to get infected following short-term contact or brief interactions.

What are the signs of tuberculosis?

The symptoms depend on where in the body the tuberculosis bacteria are found. Common symptoms include a cough lasting more than three weeks, night sweats, fever and weight loss. Other symptoms include swelling (tuberculosis of the lymph nodes) or pain (tuberculosis of the skeleton or abdomen).

How contagious is tuberculosis?

People with pulmonary tuberculosis, in which bacteria can be found in sputum, can be highly contagious before treatment begins. Its contagiousness decreases quickly during the first weeks of treatment. People with tuberculosis outside the lungs are not contagious. Young children with tuberculosis almost never transmit it. Tuberculosis is not transmitted via clothing or other objects. The disease is rarely spread outdoors.

Is tuberculosis dangerous?

Left untreated, tuberculosis can lead to serious complications and can even prove life-threatening in some cases. Young children and people with weakened immune systems are at a particularly high risk of becoming seriously ill with tuberculosis.

How is tuberculosis cured?

Tuberculosis is treated with medicines that kill the bacteria causing the disease. Treatment may take several months. It is very important that you follow the treatment your doctor prescribes.

It is also important that you do not skip any tablets during your treatment. If you fail to take your medicine regularly, the bacteria can become resistant, making the disease harder to treat.

The medicine and medical appointments are free of charge.

SMITTSKYDDSBILAD

Patientinformation från Sveriges smittskyddsläkare
Engelska – Tuberkulos

What should I keep in mind to avoid infecting others?

Tuberculosis is a notifiable disease classed as a danger to public health under the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. You must therefore follow certain rules given to you by your doctor, known as rules of conduct. Guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children comply with the rules of conduct.

You may need to be admitted to hospital for a while to avoid infecting others.

Rules of conduct

- If you have contagious tuberculosis, you are not allowed to go to work or school, or take part in leisure activities.
- You must attend any follow-up appointments your doctor requires.

How long do these rules of conduct apply?

The rules of conduct apply until your doctor says that you are no longer contagious.

Do you think the rules of conduct you have been given are wrong?

You can request that the county medical officer for your region reviews the decision on your rules of conduct. Contact the county medical officer for your region.

[Contact details for county medical officers | The Swedish Association of County Medical Officers \(slf.se\)](#)

You can also get in touch with the county medical officer by calling the central number for healthcare services in your region.

Until such a review is completed, you must follow the rules issued to you.

Contact tracing

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, you must participate in contact tracing. This means that you must provide information to healthcare personnel so they can assess when, where and how you may have been infected, and whether you may have infected others. The information you provide is confidential (secret). It is extremely important to find people who have tuberculosis so that they can be treated. A person can be infected without falling ill.

More information

[Tuberculosis – TB | 1177 \(1177.se\)](#)

