

How can TB be prevented?

There is a vaccine (BCG) that has been used for many years to help protect against TB. The BCG vaccine works best to prevent serious cases of TB in children. However, having the vaccine does not prevent TB in all cases. The vaccine is currently offered to:

- Infants under 12 months old living in areas where there are high incidences of TB.
- Children 16 years or younger, whose parents or grandparents were born in countries with high incidences of TB.
- Unvaccinated children under 16 years old who have newly immigrated from countries with high incidences of TB.
- Unvaccinated individuals under 16 years old who are close contacts of respiratory TB.

The most effective way of preventing TB spreading is to diagnose people with TB as soon as possible, and for patients to complete the treatment prescribed.

Further information

For further information please contact the TB Specialist Team at the Lister Hospital:

☎ **01438 285058**

Health and wellbeing

If you are struggling with anxiety or depression, please refer to useful resources below:

If you live in Hertfordshire you can use this service: <https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/get-help/> or <https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx>

Shout (24/7 text service)
<https://www.giveusashout.org/>

Mental Health Foundation
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health>

Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service

You can refer yourself to the service

☎ **0800 389 3998** or

Text **SMOKEFREE** to **80818** or online via
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/health-in-herts/smoking/stop-smoking-service.aspx>

You can request this
information in a different
format or another language.

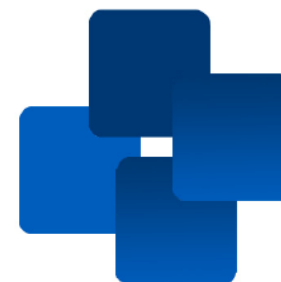
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Patient Information

Tuberculosis

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What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an illness caused by airborne bacteria and can affect nearly any part of the body, for example, lungs and bladder. TB is curable but it can cause serious health problems, particularly if not caught early. Treatment for TB is free and confidential.

How is TB spread?

When someone with infectious TB coughs or sneezes, this can send droplets containing the bacteria into the air. To become infected you need to inhale quite a lot of the bacteria, so it is unlikely you would catch TB by contact on a bus, but more likely by close contact with someone, such as with a household member.

Who is more at risk of getting TB?

Anyone can catch TB although some groups of people are more at risk. This includes:

- Living in the same household or having prolonged close contact with someone with infectious TB.
- Living in poorly ventilated or over-crowded conditions (including hostels, prisons or being homeless).
- Having lived, worked or stayed for a long time in areas with high rates of TB, such as parts of eastern Europe or south-east Asia.
- Having a weakened immune system due to illness (i.e. HIV) or treatments.
- Being dependent on drugs or alcohol misuse.
- Having poor nutrition.

What are the symptoms of TB?

The most common symptoms include:

- Persistent cough that lasts more than 3 weeks and gets progressively worse.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Fever or night sweats.
- Feeling generally unwell.
- Fatigue (extreme tiredness).
- Reduced appetite.
- Coughing up phlegm (mucus), which could be blood stained.

How is TB treated?

TB can be treated with antibiotics. Once treatment starts you should start to feel better in 2-4 weeks. However, treatment has to continue for at least 6 months, in some cases longer at your doctor's discretion.

If you don't complete the course of antibiotics TB can return and the bacteria could be resistant to the usual drugs used which can make the disease harder to treat. The sooner treatments start, the less likely you are to become seriously ill or pass TB onto others.

If TB is not treated properly, it can lead to serious health complications including death.

Your care and treatment

You will be cared for by the TB team during your treatment. The team consists of a TB consultant and TB clinical nurse specialists. You will be required to attend regular hospital appointments, which could include blood tests.

The TB clinical nurse specialists will be your main contact and will help support you during your treatment and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

If I have TB do I need to isolate?

TB can only be spread from person to person if it is present in the lungs or throat. You will need to isolate at the beginning of your treatment. Once you have been on treatment for two weeks, your care provider will complete tests to check if you remain infectious. In most cases after 2 weeks of treatment you are no longer infectious and can stop isolating.

If you attend hospital unwell during initial stages of treatment, it is important to tell a doctor or nurse so that you can be isolated in a side room. If you are attending appointments, you must wear a face mask or face covering.