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What if TB is not treated fully?

- If TB is only partly treated the disease will get worse again and the person may get very sick and die. In the meantime it can also spread to more people. If the whole course of treatment is not taken, the bacteria may become resistant to the antibiotics. This makes TB much harder or impossible to cure.

How can the spread of TB be stopped?

- by early treatment of people with TB
- by testing the family and work-mates of people with TB
- by immunising some babies and people who are at particular risk.

Treat TB!

- *go to the doctor*

take the tablets

- *get the people close to you to go for tests – talk to your doctor about this*

take the tablets

- *prevent the spread of TB*

take the tablets

*Anyone can get TB –
anyone can get it treated.*



Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is an infection that can spread from person to person. It can affect almost any part of the body, but usually affects the lungs. Bones, kidneys, glands, and the lining of the brain may be affected as well.

Before a cure was found, about half the people with TB died. Now there are antibiotics to cure the disease, TB is much less common.

BUT – TB can still kill if left untreated.

Why is TB so important?

There is a risk that TB will spread more in New Zealand. If everyone works together TB can be kept under control.

What does TB do?

When a person breathes the TB bacteria into their lungs it may:

- start destroying the lungs straight away *or*
- spread through the bloodstream to other parts of the body *or*
- be held by the body's defences and stay latent (sleeping) for many years before it develops *or*
- be held by the body's defences forever.

What are some signs of TB?

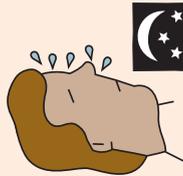
When a person has TB they may:



- lose a lot of weight



- feel tired all the time



- sweat a lot at night



- cough on and on for more than 3 weeks – usually thick spit (called phlegm or sputum) comes up, and sometimes they cough blood.

These are only some of the signs of TB. If someone is generally unwell they should see a doctor, or talk to their health worker.

How does TB spread?

- TB spreads from person to person by coughing and spitting.
- The bacteria are coughed into the air and people nearby can breathe them in through their mouth and nose.
- TB spreads most easily to the people living or working closely with a person who has TB at its infectious stage.
- TB will only spread while the active bacteria are coughed up in spit. (At this time the person is infectious and the infection can be passed on to others.)

Who can catch TB?

- TB is most common in older people who have had the infection latent in their lungs for years.
- TB can only be spread if a person has active TB and is not being treated with antibiotics for the infection.
- After about two weeks of treatment a person with active TB is not considered infectious.
- You cannot catch TB from someone who is taking their TB antibiotics as directed by their doctor.

What about animals?

Possoms, deer and cows get slightly different types of TB. Now that cows' milk is pasteurised it is very rare for people to catch TB from farm animals.

What if you have TB?

If you think you might have any of the signs of TB it's important to see your doctor – they may arrange TB tests, such as a skin test, X-ray, and spit or cough test.

If you have TB, you will be given antibiotics – tablets – to take for 6 to 12 months. The people around you should be tested too, to see if they need treatment.

Can someone with TB live a normal life?

Yes! Most people with TB return to their normal work and play within a few weeks. They may not even have to stay away from work.