

Who is at risk?

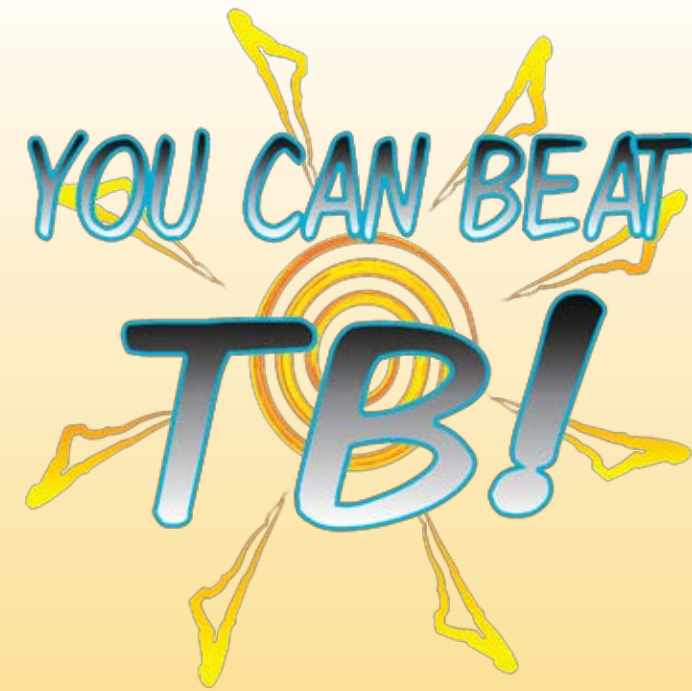
Everyone can get TB, especially children under the age of 5, people close to untreated TB patients, people with poor nutrition and lack of food, persons with low immune system (HIV, diabetes) and persons living in poorly ventilated or overcrowded houses.

How do people get TB?

The disease is spread from person to person. When a person who has TB coughs, sneezes or spits, germs are spread into the air from where they can be breathed in. Fortunately not all those infected contract TB, in most cases the germs are sealed off in the body and they do not multiply, however, if the body's defenses can no longer control the germs, they become active and the person gets TB.

What is TB?

TB is the disease that mainly affects the lungs, but can be found in any other body organs, it is caused by the TB germ, these germs are present on saliva droplets and destroy the soft tissue of the lungs causing holes to occur.



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Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa

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Signs and symptoms of TB

- A cough for longer than 2 weeks
- Chest pains
- Tiredness and weakness of the body
- Loss of appetite and weight
- Night sweats, even when it's cold
- Coughing up blood

How is TB diagnosed?

Any of the symptoms mentioned may be an indication of the diseases, seek help at your local clinic or hospital if you have these symptoms, TB testing and treatment is free! At the clinic a health worker will do sputum testing, x-ray and skin test. When a person has been suffering from TB all children under 5 years of age that have been in close contact with that person should be examined, so that if necessary they may also receive treatment.

Prevention of TB

One should cover their mouth when coughing, and exercise regularly in addition to a healthy well balanced diet. Alcohol and smoking should be avoided as they lower the body's resistance to treatment. Babies should be immunised within a month of birth. HIV positive persons should also test regularly for TB.



Treatment of TB

TB can be cured with little or no complications. Medication must however, be started as soon as possible and it must be taken regularly according to the instructions given at the clinic. It takes 6 months for TB to be cured completely, but within 2 weeks of starting the treatment the person will no longer spread the disease. Intensive phase medication is given for the first 2 months, followed by continuation phase medication taken for the next four months. If you are on ARV treatment it is important that both treatments be taken everyday. Having TB does not mean you are HIV positive, however people with HIV often get TB easily, therefore it is wise to test for both TB and HIV.

