

Fact Sheet on Tuberculosis and Tuberculosis Screening

- Tuberculosis is a type of bacteria that is carried on droplets in the air and can enter the body by breathing in air that someone with active TB has coughed out or sneezed. TB is primarily a disease of the lungs, however it can be in other areas of the body.
- Only active TB in the lungs is contagious.
- Not everyone who breathes the droplets of air infected with TB will catch TB. Generally a person has to breathe the same air for a long time in order to catch TB.
- The initial stage of the disease may be symptom free or the individual may experience a flu-like illness. Secondary stage symptoms of the disease include: slight fever, night sweats, weight loss, fatigue, a bad cough that lasts more than 2 weeks, coughing up blood or sputum, and chest pain.
- TB can be treated effectively with antibiotic therapy and anti-tuberculosis drugs for 6-9 months.
- The initial screening test for TB involves a skin test. A small amount of fluid, tuberculin protein, is injected under the skin of the forearm. A medical professional will examine the area after 48-72 hours to determine the result.
- The purpose of the skin test is to tell whether you have become infected with the germs (bacteria) that cause tuberculosis.
- If you do not return between 48-72 hours after the skin test for a reading you will need to have the test repeated.