

## What is TB?

**Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria (germs) which enter the body through the air and damage the lungs. It is a serious but curable disease.**

## How is it spread?

When a person with TB coughs, sneezes or spits the TB germs go into the air. Anyone who breathes in this air could be infected and develop TB.

## Who gets TB?

Some people believe that you only get TB if you are poor or are an alcoholic. This is not true. Anyone can get TB and it all depends on how well your body fights disease. You will find it more difficult to fight disease if you:

- do not eat healthy foods and do not get enough rest.
- you drink lots of alcohol or smoke.
- you have diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, HIV or AIDS.

***Some people believe that when you have TB you have been bewitched but this is not true. TB is a disease caused by germs and it is easy to treat.***

## Signs and symptoms

- Cough of any duration.
- Drenching night sweats.
- Severe and unintended weight loss.
- Fever
- Loss of appetite.
- Tiredness and weakness.
- Coughing up blood.
- Becoming short of breath.
- Pains in the chest.



## How do you know if you have TB?

- At the clinic a person showing signs of TB will be asked to cough up sputum.
- The sputum will be examined in the laboratory and if TB germs are found they will have to start TB treatment.
- If you have TB the people that you live with should also be checked for TB.

## TB treatment

- TB is treated and cured by taking a combination of tablets for a period of six months or more.
- It is important to take your medicines as your health care worker tells you to and to go for regular check ups.
- While on treatment tests are done at two weeks and six months after starting treatment to see if the medication is working.
- Do not stop your treatment until your health care worker says you can. This is very important.

## Drug resistant TB (MDR and XDR TB)

- If you don't adhere properly to your TB treatment by not taking all your pills or you miss some days, you can develop drug resistant TB.
- Drug resistant TB means that the TB germ will not respond to the usual TB drugs that are used.
- This is very dangerous, because it is very difficult to treat.
- It can be passed on to other people who have never had TB before. This will put those around you at risk.

## Common side-effects of TB treatment are:

- Nausea.
- Cramps or tingling feeling in your feet (called peripheral neuropathy).
- Stinging pains.
- Changes in the colour of your urine and tears.
- Skin rash.

If you have side effects you must not stop taking TB treatment on your own. Carry on with the treatment but go to your doctor or nurse and tell them what you are experiencing. They can give you something for the nausea and something for the cramps.

## Treatment support - DOTS

- In South Africa, one of the ways people receive TB treatment is through the DOTS system. "DOTS" stands for Directly Observed Treatment Short Course.
- DOTS supporters are usually health workers who assist people in taking their TB treatment. Ask at your clinic about this kind of support.



## What is the link between TB and HIV?

- If you are HIV-positive, HIV attacks the body's immune system and you get sick more easily. One of the most common diseases that you can get is TB.
- It is important that if you have HIV you are screened for TB and that if you have TB you are tested for HIV so that you can get the right treatment.

## TB treatment and ARVs

- Everyone who is HIV positive and has TB should start treatment. Doctors will treat the TB first, and then start you on ARVs.

For more information: [www.hivsa.com](http://www.hivsa.com)



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ISSUE 1 - SEPTEMBER 2016

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This pamphlet is funded with support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program via the US Agency for International Development under Cooperative Agreement No. AID-674-A-12-00015 through Anova Health Institute. The views expressed in this pamphlet do not necessarily reflect those of PEPFAR, USAID or AHI.

**National AIDS Help Line: 0800 012 322 (toll free)**

**Contact HIVSA - Tel: +27 11 494 1900**

What YOU need to know about...

# Tuberculosis (TB)

