

Understanding, diagnosing and treating tuberculosis



Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that has affected the human population for many years. TB is a contagious disease caused by the Mycobacterium Tuberculosis bacteria. The World Health Organisation states that each year 10 million people contract TB and of those, 1.5 million people die from the infection. This is why we all need to know about this illness.

TB can affect different parts of the body however the lungs are the most affected organs. Conditions such as diabetes, HIV & malnutrition increase the risk of severe TB illness, because these conditions can weaken the immune system. This is why openly coughing, sneezing and spitting saliva can pass TB from person to person.



Common symptoms of TB infection:

- coughing for more than 2 weeks.
- night sweats that may leave you drenched.
- weight loss & a poor appetite
- feeling weak & tired all the time.
- fever.

It is important to immediately consult a doctor when you start to experience any of the above symptoms.



How to diagnose TB:

- testing sputum.
- testing bodily fluids such as urine
- chest x-ray.
- ultrasound of the abdomen.

Your doctor may also do other tests to look for other conditions and to monitor your present health. TB is a curable illness and treatment includes a course of antibiotics for at least 6 months. It is important to complete the course so that TB is fully treated. Early detection and treatment can help save lives and lower the transmission rate.



Safety precautions against TB:

- cover your mouth & nose when you cough.
- throw all used tissues into a bin.
- keep windows open.
- sleep in separate rooms, if possible.
- wear a mask when you are around the elderly, children or people who may have weak immune systems.
- complete your course of treatment.

