Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Infection Prevention and Control

Tuberculosis of the lungs

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a germ called Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It most often affects the lungs.

Causes of tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis (TB) disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. TB germs are released into the air when a person with TB of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. These germs can stay in the air for several hours.

TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious.

When a person breathes in TB germs, the germs can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. From there, the germs can move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

TB can sometimes cause no immediate problems and be inactive in the body for months or even years. Illness can then develop some time after exposure. This means the germs can be spread to other people.

TB cannot be spread by sharing the same cups, cutlery, bed linen or other household items.

People who are more likely to get TB

The people most likely to catch TB are those who have spent a lot of time with a person who has TB. This includes family members, friends and co-workers.

Symptoms of TB

The main symptoms of TB in the lungs are:

- a bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- pain in the chest
- coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs)

Other symptoms of TB include:

- weakness or fatigue
- weight loss
- no appetite
- chills
- fever
- sweating at night

Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected.

Treatment of tuberculosis (TB)

TB disease can be treated and cured by taking several antibiotics for 6 to 12 months. You must finish the medicine and take the drugs exactly as prescribed. If you stop taking the medicines too soon, the TB can come back.

If the medicines are not taken correctly, the TB germs that are still alive may become resistant to those drugs. TB that is resistant to drugs is harder and more expensive to treat.

In some situations, the TB nurse specialists regularly visit people who have TB to watch them take their medicines. This is called directly observed therapy, and it helps people complete treatment in the least amount of time.

How can we prevent TB spreading in hospital?

You will be nursed in a side room until you have received appropriate treatment. This could be for at least 2 weeks but may be longer. This depends on the results from sputum samples taken during your stay.

Staff will wear a mask to prevent them breathing in the TB germs when entering your room.

If you need to leave your room, you'll be asked to wear a mask so the TB germs cannot be released into the air when you breathe.

If you have a cough, please cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Clean your hands after disposing of the tissue in the bin.

Visitors

Your family who lives with you may continue to visit you. We wouldn't advise visits from family/friends that you have not recently seen. This could expose them to the infection.

Visitors will be asked to wear a mask when entering the room and for the duration of the visit.

Going home

The Community TB Nursing Service will contact you and you'll be assigned a named nurse. Your named nurse will visit you at home and support you whilst you are on TB treatment. They'll also arrange TB screening for anyone you've seen a lot whilst unwell.

If you're admitted to any hospital in the future:

- tell your nurses and doctors that you've had TB in the past.

Infection Prevention and Control Team

The IPCT help staff with the prevention and management of all infections across the Trust. You can contact them by telephone or by post:

Infection Prevention and Control Team

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Clifford Bridge Road, Coventry CV2 2DX

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

024 7696 4791

If you wish to speak to a TB Nurse Specialist, please contact them on 024 76964169.

More information

NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/Tuberculosis/

TB Alert website: http://www.tbalert.org

Public Health England: http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Tuberculosis/

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 4791 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

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