TB, or tuberculosis, is an infectious disease caused by bacteria. The disease usually attacks the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, including the stomach, the brain, the bones and the spine.

How do people get TB?

TB germs must be forced into the air, and to get a tuberculosis infection you must breathe in those germs.

This happens when TB infected people cough, sneeze, or spit. But even if you’ve been around an infected person, or breathed in the bacteria they expelled into the air, you still have a chance at escaping TB - not everyone who breathes in the bacteria will develop tuberculosis.

The immune systems of children, adolescents and young people living with HIV may not be strong enough to fight off infections. This means they have a higher risk of getting TB.

Client with:
- rapid weight loss,
- night sweats,
- coughing or fever

may be at risk of TB. It is very important that anyone with symptoms is screened for TB at their local clinic.

TB can be diagnosed with many different methods.

A negative sputum test is no guarantee for no TB! If TB is diagnosed late, people can become very sick.

Early diagnosis means that people with TB can get on to treatment early.

Red Flags Refer those with symptoms and those not adhering well to treatment.

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is treated and cured with antibiotics.

They must be taken every day for at least six months. These antibiotics can be stopped when TB has been cured. If medication is not taken properly, people with TB can become very unwell. Adherence to TB medication helps you to stay healthy.

Unfortunately, TB bacteria has become highly resistant to most antibiotics. This makes treatment difficult. Many different kinds of antibiotics need to be given over a long period of time. There is a form of TB that is resistant to all medicines called Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDRTB). No CATS should be seeing clients with MDRTB unless the Zvandiri Mentor has said that it is okay. Support can still be given over SMS and telephone calls.

Side effects

Like all medicines, TB medicines can cause side effects, for example stomach pain, diarrhoea, yellow eyes, skin rash and numbness in hands and feet.

People with side effects should be checked by the doctor or nurse who will know what to do next.