

What is TB?

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.



Watch out for Signs and Symptoms of TB

Clients 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)

TPT TB Preventive Therapy

Just like HIV, TB can reside in your body without making you sick for a number of years. By treating with TPT, you treat the TB infection before it makes you sick. The protective effect lasts for three years, but is not hundred percent so it is still possible to develop TB during and after taking TPT.

TPT can either be taken as a one pill regimen taken over six months, complemented with vitamins so that you don't develop side effects such as pins and needles. Recently, MoHCC also introduced a TPT regimen taken once weekly over three months, consisting of two drugs, which has fewer side effects than the regimen consisting of only Isoniazid.

TB is treated and cured with antibiotics.

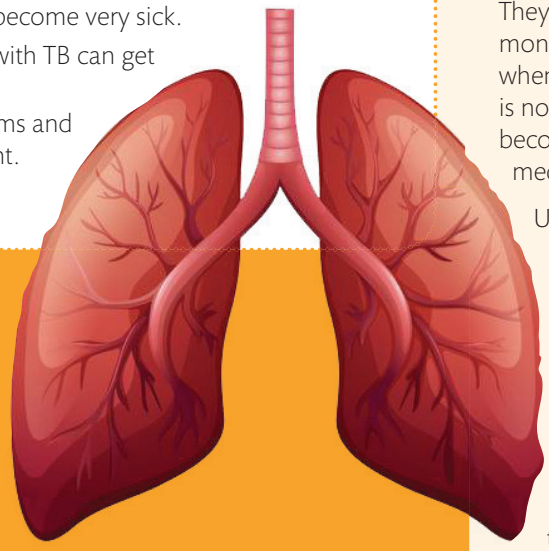
They must be taken every day for at least six months. These antibiotics can be stopped when TB has been cured. If medication is not taken properly, people with TB can become very unwell. Adherence to TB medication helps you to stay healthy.

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.



Preventing TB

▶ You need to adhere well to your ARVs so that your immune system remains strong. You should also be screened for TB with a sputum test and/or a Chest Xray every year - even if you don't have any signs or symptoms of TB! In addition, you should take TB Preventing Therapy - TPT. This medicine can help to protect you from getting TB.

▶ Clients with TB should not be seen at home by CATS during the first two months of TB treatment as this is when they are most likely to pass TB. After two months of TB treatment, they are much less likely to breathe active TB into the air.

▶ Clients that are coughing may have undiagnosed TB. While sunshine and good ventilation protects against TB, dark enclosed spaces increases the risk of spreading TB. It is important that you as CATS never sit in such a space with a client who is coughing. Always try to see your clients outdoors or move out of a room as soon as possible if you notice that your client is coughing.