

Anne Arundel County Department of Health Communicable Diseases

Phone: 410-222-7256
www.aahealth.org



The services and facilities of Anne Arundel County Department of Health are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, political affiliation or opinion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

(Adapted from the brochure, "What you need to know about TB"
developed by the New York City Department of Health Division of TB Control.)

My Health Center

Phone:

Address:

Hours:

Other:

Anne Arundel County Clinics:

Glen Burnie Health Center: 410-222-6633

Parole Health Center: 410-222-4438



What You Need to Know About TB

Anyone Can Get TB



What is TB?

TB (tuberculosis) is a serious disease that hurts the lungs. However, TB can be prevented with treatment. TB can also be cured.

How are TB germs spread?

TB germs are spread through the air. If you spend a long time with someone who is sick with TB, you may breathe in TB germs. This happens when the person coughs, sneezes, speaks, or laughs.

TB germs are spread only through the air. They are not spread by shaking hands or by sitting on a toilet seat. You must breathe in TB germs for them to enter your body.

What happens when someone has TB?

When you first breathe TB germs into your lungs, your body protects you by building a wall around the germs. This makes the germs go to “sleep” and stops them from hurting your body. Sleeping TB germs are called “latent TB,” and people with latent TB are said to have **latent TB infection (LTBI)**. Latent TB germs can stay asleep for a long time, sometimes for life. People with LTBI won't feel sick. They cannot spread TB to other people.

However, sometimes TB germs “wake up” and your body cannot protect you. When this happens, you have **active TB disease**. This can make you feel very sick. You can also spread TB to other people.

People with active TB may have the following symptoms:

- ✓ Coughing for 3 weeks or more
- ✓ Fever or chills
- ✓ Sweating at night
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Feeling tired all the time
- ✓ Appetite loss

Is there a test for TB?

Yes. If the TB skin test is “negative” you most likely do not have TB germs in your body, but you may need a second test 10-12 weeks after you spent time with an infectious person. If the test is “positive,” you have TB germs in your body. You need a chest x-ray and medical check-up to see if you have latent or active TB.

Should I get the TB skin test?

It depends. Some people do not need to get a skin test. Other people are at high risk for TB. They should get a skin test.

You should get a skin test if:

- ✓ You have symptoms of active TB
- ✓ You have spent a long time with someone who has active TB
- ✓ You have come to the U.S. recently from a country with a lot of TB
- ✓ You have certain illnesses such as diabetes or chronic kidney failure
- ✓ You have worked or stayed in a homeless shelter, prison, or other group setting
- ✓ You have HIV/AIDS

What if I had the BCG vaccine?

BCG vaccine does not usually protect people against TB. You may still get latent TB or active TB. Even if you have had BCG, you will need a TB skin test.

TB Can Be Cured

Can active TB be cured?

Yes. Active TB can be cured with medicine. If you have active TB, you must take your medicine for at least 6 months. The Department of Health offers a program called DOT (directly observed therapy). DOT makes taking your medicine easier.

Why do I need to take TB medicine for a long time?

The only way to cure active TB is to take all of your medicine for at least 6 months. Be patient. TB germs take a long time to die. Even if you feel better after a few weeks, keep on taking your medicine. If you do not, you will stop feeling better. You may even get sicker.

If I take TB medicine, can I still spread TB germs?

No. After a few weeks of treatment, most people do not spread TB germs. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe for you to spend time with friends and family. While taking TB medicine you can live at home and go to work. However, do not stop taking your medicine. If you do, you may start spreading TB germs again.

Can the Department of Health help me with TB?

Yes. We have clinics that provide many TB services. At our clinics, you do not need health insurance. All services are free. You do not need to worry about immigration. No one will ask about your status. Our clinics provide high quality care. Our staff speaks several languages. We can answer your questions about TB. We can cure TB.