Tuberculosis

Timely detection and treatment

Information from your Public Health Department

English/Englisch

www.lgl.bayern.de
Tuberculosis is a serious, infectious disease caused by bacteria.

Early detection (diagnosis) and complete treatment are important to ensure speedy recovery.

Tuberculosis can attack various organs of the human body. Most frequently it affects the lungs.

But it may also target other areas organs, including the lymph nodes, kidneys, joints, spinal column and the central nervous system.
What are the possible symptoms?

- Persistent coughing, sometimes with bloody sputum
- Pain when breathing
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Fever
- Unwanted weight loss
- Night sweating
- Enlarged lymph nodes

Who particularly at risk?

- Infants and small children
- Persons with a weakened immune system, e.g. due to chronic disease (tumor diseases, HIV) or malnutrition.
- Persons exposed to tuberculosis sufferers in their immediate environments (e.g. friends and family).
- Migrants from southern Africa, eastern Europe and central Asia.
- Persons who have spent time in a country with a greater prevalence of tuberculosis than in Germany.
- Person who have contracted tuberculosis in the past.
How is tuberculosis transmitted?

People suffering from open pulmonary tuberculosis are contagious, as they expel bacteria when coughing and sneezing. Other people may inhale the droplets containing the bacteria and contract the disease in this way. Infection depends on the duration and intensity of contact. Tuberculosis that does not affect the lungs will not be contagious from normal contact.

What is the relationship between infection and disease expression?

Not everyone infected with tuberculosis bacteria will become ill. In most cases the disease will not be expressed, as the immune system controls the tuberculosis pathogens after they enter the body. So only around ten percent of people fall ill in the first two years after the bacteria enter their systems. But the disease may express after just months or even decades, depending on the person’s age and the condition of their immune system.
How is the disease diagnosed?

Persons showing symptoms of tuberculosis require immediate medical advice and examination. An X-ray of the lungs can help to identify tuberculosis. Other methods include blood and skin testing. But definite diagnosis is only possible through detection of tuberculosis bacteria in a suitable screening material (e.g. sputum).

How is tuberculosis treated?

Effective medication for the treatment of tuberculosis is available. The disease is curable in most cases, provided treatment lasts long enough and the medication is taken properly.

Where can I receive help?

Please contact your doctor if you suspect that you may have contracted tuberculosis. Your local Public Health Department offers free consultation.

Additional information is available on the Internet:

- Robert Koch Institute: [www.rki.de/tuberkulose](http://www.rki.de/tuberkulose)
- Bavarian State Office for Health and Food Safety (LGL): [www.lgl.bayern.de/gesundheit/infektionsschutz/infektionskrankheiten_a_z/tuberkulose/](http://www.lgl.bayern.de/gesundheit/infektionsschutz/infektionskrankheiten_a_z/tuberkulose/)
- German Central Committee against Tuberculosis (DZK): [www.dzk-tuberkulose.de](http://www.dzk-tuberkulose.de)
- ExplainTB online: Smartphone-based information about tuberculosis: [www.explaintb.org](http://www.explainTB.org)
Literaturverzeichnis:

