

you need another test.

What if my test is positive?

A positive test usually means that you have been infected with the TB germs. It does not mean that you have TB disease. Other tests, such as a chest x-ray or sputum (phlegm) sample, are needed to see if you have TB disease.

Who is more likely to develop tuberculosis?

Once a person has TB infection, he or she has a higher chance of developing TB disease if the person:

- Has HIV infection;
- Is younger than 5 years old;
- Was infected with TB germs within the last 2 years;
- Has other health problems, like diabetes, that make it hard for the body to fight germs;
- Abuses alcohol or drugs;
- Was not treated correctly for TB disease in the past.

Can tuberculosis be treated?

Yes, it can be treated, with a combination of antibiotics for several months.

Contact information

St. Maarten Medical Center

Internal Medicine

Welgelegen Road 30

Cay Hill

St. Maarten

Tel: +1 (721) 543-1111 ext 1300, 1310

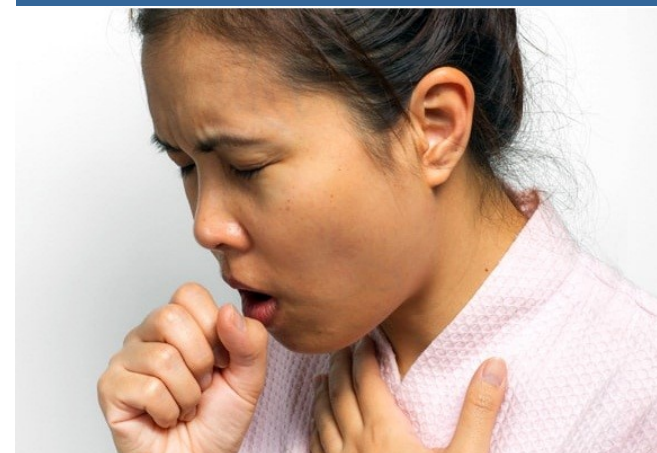
Fax: + 1 (721) 543-0116

Email: info@smmc.sx

Web: www.smmc.sx

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Tuberculosis



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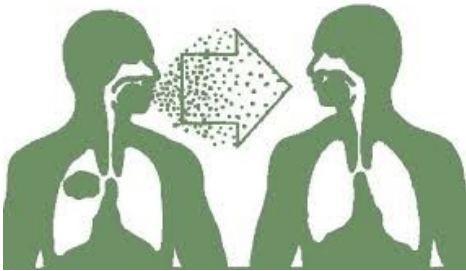
St. Maarten Medical Center

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (=TB=TBC) is a disease that usually affects the lungs. TB sometimes affects other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine. TB disease can cause death if it is not treated.

How is tuberculosis spread?

TB germs are spread from person to person through the air. TB germs are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, laughs, or sings. People nearby may breathe in the TB germs and become infected. TB is NOT spread by sharing silverware or cups, or sharing saliva when kissing someone.



What are the signs and symptoms of tuberculosis?

Although your body may harbor the bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB), your immune system usually can prevent you from becoming sick. For this reason, doctors make a distinction between:

Latent TB. In this condition, you have a TB infection, but the bacteria remain in your body in an inactive state and cause no

symptoms. Latent TB, also called inactive TB or TB infection, isn't contagious. It can turn into active TB, so treatment is important for the person with latent TB and to help control the spread of TB.

Active TB. This condition makes you sick and in most cases can spread to others. It can occur in the first few weeks after infection with the TB bacteria, or it might occur years later.

Signs and symptoms of active TB include:

- Coughing that lasts three or more weeks
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain, or pain with breathing or coughing
- Unintentional weight loss
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Chills
- Loss of appetite

Tuberculosis can also affect other parts of your body, including your kidneys, spine or brain. When TB occurs outside your lungs, signs and symptoms vary according to the organs involved. For example, tuberculosis of the spine may give you back pain, and tuberculosis in your kidneys might cause blood in your urine.

How can you tell if you have tuberculosis?

If you think you might have any of the signs of TB it's important to see your doctor.

Your doctor may administer a TB skin test or TB blood test. If you have a positive result to either of the tests, you will be given other tests to see if you have latent TB infection or active TB.

How are the tuberculosis tests administered?

For a TB skin test (Mantoux), a nurse uses a small needle to put some fluid, called tuberculin, just under your skin. This is usually done on the lower inside part of your arm. After you get the test, you must return in 2 to 3 days to see if there is a reaction to the test. If there is a reaction, the size of the reaction is measured to determine if you have a positive result.

If you receive the blood test, a sample of your blood will be taken to do the test. Your health care worker will tell you how to get the results of your test.

What if my test is negative?

A negative test usually means you are not infected with TB germs. However, the test may be falsely negative if your immune system is not working properly or if you were infected recently. This is because it usually takes 2 to 8 weeks after exposure to a person with TB disease for the immune system to produce a response to the test. If you have a negative result and it has been less than 8 weeks since you were last exposed to TB disease, you may need to get a second test. Your health care worker will let you know if