



## › WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

Tuberculosis, or TB, is a disease caused by a germ, the **TB bacillus** or Koch bacillus. TB most often attacks the lungs, but can also infect other parts of the body such as the bones, intestines, kidneys or the brain.

## › WHO CAN GET TB?



Pulmonary TB is a **contagious** disease.

The TB bacilli germs are present in the lungs of a person with TB. When an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks, the germs are ejected in the air. If somebody else inhales this air, the germs

are inhaled at the same time.

This is why anybody can become **infected** with the TB bacillus. However, some people run a higher risk of infection than others. Depending on your way of living and the work you do, the risk is highest if you have frequent and close contact with people with TB.

## › WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LATENT TB INFECTION AND TB DISEASE?



When you inhale the TB bacilli, they arrive in the lungs. The defence mechanisms in your body attack the bacilli, and most often eliminate them.

If the bacilli remain in your body, they are usually “asleep”. This means that they are not dangerous. You have a **latent TB infection**, but you are not sick or contagious.

If you are old, very young or weakened by other diseases, it can happen that the defence mechanisms in your body are not strong enough to fight the germs. If that happens, the TB bacilli may wake up, multiply and you will get **TB disease**.

If you have TB disease that attacks the lungs, you may present the following symptoms:

- cough
- coughing up sputum (sometimes bloody)
- tiredness
- fever
- night sweating
- weight loss.

**If you suffer from any of these, consult a doctor as quickly as possible!**



TIREDFNESS



FEVER



NIGHT SWEATING



COUGH



COUGHING UP SPUTUM



WEIGHT LOSS

## › HOW DO YOU DETECT TB IN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO AN INFECTED PERSON?

The injection of **tuberculin** under the skin enables doctors to know if you are infected with TB. If this is the case, there will be a local reaction 3-5 days after the injection. This test is called the **tuberculin skin test** (or formerly called intradermal reaction or Mantoux test) and must be interpreted by a healthcare professional.

If the test is positive, a chest X-ray must be done:

- › If the chest X-ray is normal, this means that you have a **latent TB infection**.
- › Otherwise, additional examinations will be required (e.g. search for TB Bacillus in the sputum) in order to make a diagnosis of **pulmonary TB**.