

# TUBERCULOSIS

**\*\*Reportable to local or state health department\*\***

This fact sheet is for provider information only. If you have questions, please call the health department. Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection that usually affects the lungs but can affect any part of the body. TB can be life-threatening, but it is curable with antibiotic medications.

## CAUSE

Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacteria.

## SYMPTOMS

General symptoms of active TB disease may include feeling tired or sick, weight loss, fever, or night sweats. When active TB disease is in the lungs, there may be cough, chest pain, and possibly coughing up blood. Symptoms often develop gradually and worsen until treatment is started. If TB is elsewhere in the body, there may be other symptoms.

## SPREAD

When someone with TB disease in their lungs coughs, sneezes, yells, or sings, tiny droplets with Mycobacterium tuberculosis are released into the air and another person breathes in these droplets. Most healthy people who become infected with TB bacteria develop latent TB infection and have no symptoms. This means they are not made ill from the infection and cannot spread the bacteria to others.

## INCUBATION

It takes 2 to 12 weeks after exposure for infection to be detected by a tuberculin skin test (TST) or a blood test. There are currently two TB blood tests approved by the FDA for use in the U.S.; 1. The QuantiFERON®-TB Gold In-Tube test (QFT-GIT) and 2. The T-SPOT®.TB test (T-Spot). If an infected person develops active TB disease, symptoms can occur within a few weeks, months, or sometimes, not for years after the initial infection.

## CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Only active TB disease of the lungs or voice box (larynx) is contagious. The contagious period varies from person to person, but usually from when the symptoms begin until the person has completed several weeks of adequate treatment. TB disease in other parts of the body is usually not contagious. Young children, who lack capacity to cough forcefully, typically are not as contagious as adults.

## DIAGNOSIS

Tuberculosis is diagnosed based on signs and symptoms, physical exam, TB screening test results, chest x-ray (if indicated), and laboratory exam of material obtained from cough specimens or other body fluids, or tissues.

## EXCLUSION

Childcare and School: Consult with your local or state health department.

Each situation must be evaluated individually to determine whether the person is contagious and poses a risk to others. A person with a positive TB test but without symptoms should not be excluded but should see a healthcare provider as soon as possible after the positive test is detected for further evaluation and possible treatment for latent TB infection.

## TREATMENT

Active tuberculosis disease is treated with multiple antibiotic medications for a minimum of 6 months or as long as 2 years. Latent TB infection is usually treated with a single antibiotic medication for 9 months to prevent the development of active TB disease.

## PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Tuberculosis testing is not universally recommended for Nevada children, including those attending childcare.
- Persons exposed to active, infectious TB disease should have a TB screening test performed. If the first TB test is negative, another TB test may be needed in 6-8 weeks to determine if infection has developed.

**For more information, please contact your local health department.**

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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