

TB Facts and Figures for Teachers



What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is often called TB for short. TB is a serious but treatable infection, caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

TB is primarily a disease of the lungs but it can infect other parts of the body such as the brain or spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get effective treatment.

Someone with TB in the lungs or throat (pulmonary TB) may be able to pass it on to others when they cough and sneeze. However after the first two weeks of antibiotic treatment most people with pulmonary TB will no longer be infectious.

TB in the UK

Today, the UK has some of the worst rates of TB infection in Western Europe. In 2013 there were 7892 new cases, with London accounting for 38% of these. London has one of the highest rates of TB in Western Europe, and the TB rate in Redbridge is higher than the London average.

How is TB Spread?

TB is spread from person to person through the air. When a person with infectious TB coughs or sneezes they propel small droplets with the germs into the air. These germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. People who breathe in the air containing these TB germs may become infected. Fortunately, TB is not very infectious and most people who get TB have spent a prolonged period of time in close proximity to someone who is infectious, e.g. they are a member of the same household. TB is not spread through shared surfaces, shaking someone's hand, sharing toothbrushes, kissing, or sharing cups and cutlery. Covering your mouth when you cough and sneeze can help stop the transmission of TB.

TB Risk Factors

One of the most important risk factors for contracting TB is spending sufficient time with someone who has an infectious form of the illness. People at risk include:

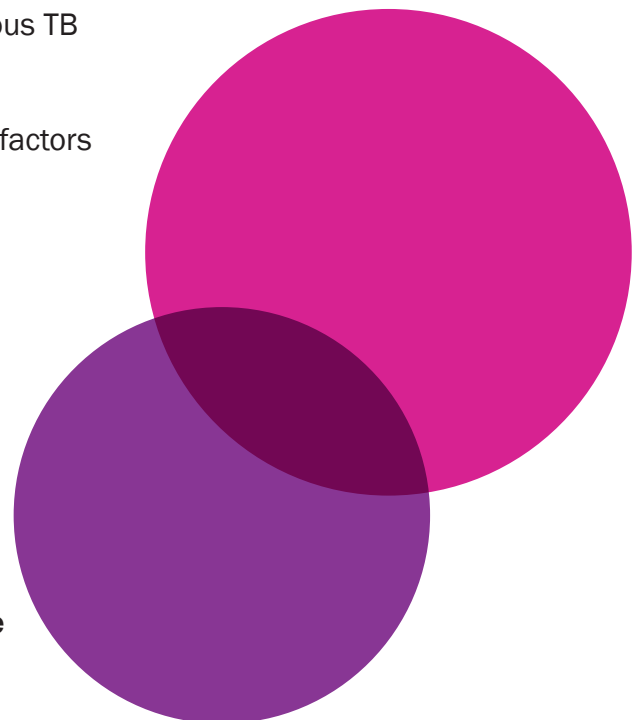
- those who spend time with someone with untreated, infectious TB
- those with links to countries where TB is still common
- people who have HIV or poor immune systems
- people who experience chronic poor health through lifestyle factors such as homelessness, alcoholism, drug abuse and prison.

Symptoms of TB

The symptoms of pulmonary TB are:

- a cough that lasts for more than two to three weeks
- coughing up blood or sputum
- weakness or extreme tiredness
- loss of appetite or weight loss
- night sweats
- fever/high temperature.

TB treatment is free. If you are worried you or someone else might have TB symptoms, please see your GP or contact the BHR Chest Clinic Team on 020 8970 8123.





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How is TB Cured?

Tuberculosis is a serious but curable disease and can be fatal if left untreated. Treatment involves a combination of four different antibiotics given over a six to nine month period, although in some cases this may be longer. For most people hospital admission is not required. It is necessary to take all of the medicine as and when it is prescribed. If treatment is stopped too soon, it is possible to become ill again. In addition the bacteria may become resistant to those drugs.

Drug-resistant TB

Like most bacteria, the bacteria that cause tuberculosis can develop resistance to antibiotics. This means the medicines used can no longer kill the bacteria they are supposed to fight. Drug-resistant TB is now a global health threat.

Drug-resistant TB will usually require treatment for at least 18 months using a combination of different antibiotics. These drugs are less effective, more toxic and much more costly.

What is BCG (Bacille Calmette–Guérin) immunisation?

All babies will now be given the BCG vaccination before they leave hospital. The BCG contains a weak strain of the tuberculosis bacterium, which has been altered so it will not cause a TB infection but will encourage the immune system to build resistance to the disease. The vaccine is 70-80% effective against the most severe forms of TB, such as TB meningitis, in children. It is less effective in preventing pulmonary TB, which is the more common form in adults.

Find out more about TB

RedbridgeCVS has been commissioned by Public Health Redbridge to raise awareness about TB in Redbridge schools and communities. RedbridgeCVS has recruited and trained local people as Health Buddies to share information on how TB is transmitted, what symptoms to look out for and where to get help.

Encourage students to test their knowledge with this 5-minute online quiz:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/TBAware

We are also happy to do TB awareness sessions for school staff, students, governors and parents. TB awareness sessions are available Monday to Sunday: morning, afternoon or evening, in a variety of community languages. Sessions are interactive and last around 30 minutes. For more information please contact: Ola on 0208 514 9617 or email: ola@redbridgecvs.net or visit www.redbridgecvs.net/what-we-do/health/tb-awareness-project.

You can learn more about TB by going to *The Truth About TB* website: www.thetruthaboutTB.org or to find out about the charity TB Alert, go to www.tbalert.org.

London Borough of

Redbridge



RedbridgeCVS



THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
TB