

**TB is curable**

There's plenty of information, help and support available for people who are affected by TB



#### GETTING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

##### **TB Alert information service**

Phone: 01273 234770  
Email: [info@tbalert.org](mailto:info@tbalert.org)  
[www.thetruthabouttb.org](http://www.thetruthabouttb.org)  
Support and advice for people concerned about TB.

##### **TB Action Group (TBAG)**

Phone: 01273 234770  
[www.tb-alert.healthunlocked.com](http://www.tb-alert.healthunlocked.com)  
A peer support and advocacy group for people affected by TB.

##### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
Information about TB and a service finder.

##### **Bristol Community Health – Health Links**

Phone: 0117 902 7115  
[www.briscomhealth.org.uk](http://www.briscomhealth.org.uk)  
Health Links helps black and minority ethnic communities in Bristol to access health services.

##### **Embrace UK**

Phone: 020 8801 9224  
Email: [post@embraceuk.org](mailto:post@embraceuk.org)  
Support and advice for disadvantaged groups, including migrants, who are concerned about welfare and health issues, including TB and HIV.

This leaflet was developed in partnership with TB Alert, NHS Bristol, Embrace-UK and Bristol Community Health (Health Links).

**TB Alert would like to acknowledge the support of NHS Bristol in producing this leaflet.**



**THE TRUTH ABOUT TB**

**The Truth About TB in the Somali community**



[www.thetruthabouttb.org](http://www.thetruthabouttb.org)

## WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS (TB)?

TB is a curable illness caused by airborne bacteria (germs). The number of people getting ill with TB in the UK is increasing. Though anyone can get TB, people who have links to regions where TB is more common are particularly affected. This includes people from countries in southern Asian and Africa, including Somalia.

## HOW DO YOU GET TB?

When someone with infectious TB coughs or sneezes, they send droplets into the air that contain TB germs. If you breathe these in you are at risk of getting TB. Usually, your immune system will wipe out any germs. Even if it doesn't get rid of them, there's only a small chance you will become ill right away. The germs can stay asleep in your body, so you will not be ill or able to infect other people. But sometimes, the germs wake up and make you ill with TB. This might happen years after you first breathed them in.

## SYMPTOMS

TB is most likely to affect the lungs, but it can affect any part of the body. Common symptoms to look out for are:

- A cough that lasts for over three weeks
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Extreme tiredness
- Loss of appetite

### There are a lot of myths about TB

Many people think that TB is highly contagious or hereditary. Others believe it can be caught from cups, plates or touching someone with TB. In fact, TB can only be caught if you breathe in the germs – sunlight and opening windows can help stop this.

Symptoms of TB can appear slowly. You may not have all the symptoms and TB symptoms can be similar to those of other illnesses. Khat use can disguise the symptoms of TB.



## AM I LIKELY TO GET TB?

Anyone can get TB, but Somali people in the UK are at more risk because:

- They have links to a part of the world where TB is more common.
- They may spend time in places where it is easier for TB to spread. Overcrowded housing and social venues, such as where people go to chew khat, are places where TB can spread more easily.
- They may live on a low income, which can be stressful and makes affording nutritious food more difficult. This can weaken the immune system, which is the body's natural defence against illnesses such as TB.
- Chewing khat can weaken the immune system and affect the appetite. Not eating enough can also make the immune system weaker.

## WHAT ACTION SHOULD YOU TAKE

If you have any symptoms that could indicate TB it is important that you see a doctor as soon as possible. If you don't have a GP, you can go to the nearest NHS drop-in centre, where you can also ask how to register with a GP.

If you are seriously ill, go to accident and emergency. The longer you leave it, the worse you will feel and the more likely it is that you could pass TB on to others.

TB treatment is free for everyone that needs it.

If you are engaged in a refugees and asylum seekers service, you may also want to ask your support worker for advice.

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