



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about Tuberculosis (TB)

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually causes infection in the lungs, but TB bacteria can cause infection in any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. TB is a treatable illness.

How is TB spread?

TB bacteria spreads through the air from one person to another. Getting TB typically requires many hours of spending time near a person who is sick from TB. TB cannot be spread by touching doorknobs, tables, utensils or other surfaces.

Is it safe to come to school?

Yes, Capital High School is working closely with Central District Health to help identify people who may have been exposed. There is no reason to be concerned about attending class or school events. Once again, getting TB typically requires many hours of contact with a person who is sick from TB. TB cannot be spread by touching door knobs, tables, utensils or other surfaces.

How is TB diagnosed?

TB infection is typically diagnosed by a skin or blood test. Results are available in one to three days. Most people who are infected will not be sick and cannot give TB to others. If a person is sick with symptoms due to TB, a chest X-ray is required, regardless of the blood test results.

What is the difference between TB infection and TB disease?

People with *latent TB infection* have TB bacteria in their bodies but they are not sick and cannot spread the bacteria to others. However, they may develop TB disease in the future. They are often prescribed antibiotics to prevent them from developing TB disease.

People with TB disease are sick from TB bacteria. They usually have symptoms of TB disease. People with TB disease of the lungs or throat can spread the bacteria to others. They are prescribed drugs that can treat TB disease.

Can TB be treated?

Yes, TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs for 6 to 12 months. Latent TB can be treated by taking medication for 3 to 9 months.

What are the symptoms of a person sick with TB (also called TB disease or active TB)?

Some common symptoms of active TB include:

- A cough lasting more than three weeks
- Fever
- Heavy sweating at night
- Loss of appetite
- Unintended weight loss
- Coughing up blood
- Pain in the chest
- Chills
- Weakness or fatigue

Who needs to be tested?

Central District Health is directly contacting all individuals who need to be tested. If you are not directly contacted, you do not need testing at this time because you were not exposed.

Do my friends, roommates or family members need to get tested?

No, TB infection itself is not contagious and only people directly exposed need to be tested at this time.

When and how will people get test results?

Generally, test results are available within one to three days. The provider who performs your test will contact you to share results — negative or positive — as quickly as possible.

What if the test is positive?

If a person tests positive, the healthcare provider who is seen for the testing will contact that individual for additional evaluation.

How do I know if someone is contagious?

A person with TB can only be contagious if he or she is sick and showing symptoms, such as cough, fever or night sweats. Central District Health will work with other

healthcare providers to evaluate anyone who has symptoms that could be due to TB to determine whether he or she has TB and is potentially contagious.

Why am I not being tested?

Only people who are most at risk when the possible exposure occurred need to be tested. **If you have not been contacted by Central District Health, we don't believe you were exposed.**

Where can I learn more about TB?

For any questions on exposure or information about TB, please call Central District Health Communicable Disease Control program at 208-321-2222 Or go to: www.cdhd.idaho.gov/ or <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/default.htm>.