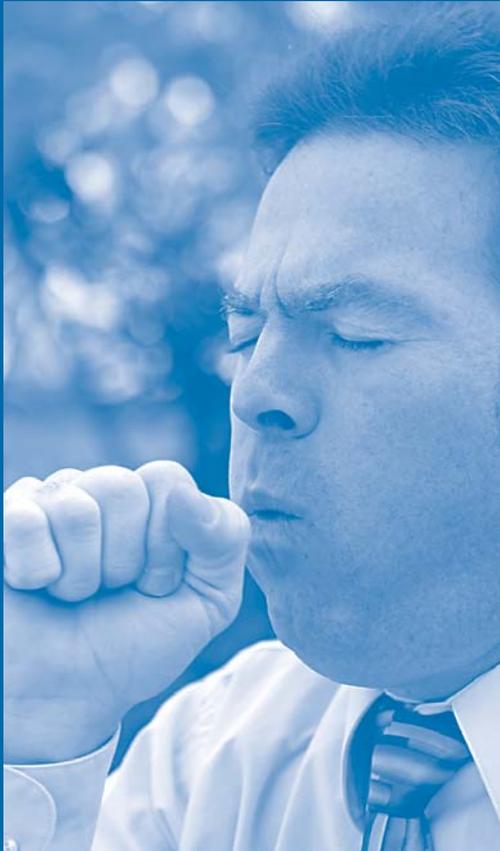


## What is tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis or TB is a disease caused by bacteria called mycobacterium tuberculosis. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but can attack any part of the body, such as the kidneys, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB can be deadly.



Breathe New Hampshire has served the people of New Hampshire for over 90 years. Through education, advocacy, research, and partnerships, we are working to eliminate lung disease and improve the quality of life for those living with lung disease in New Hampshire.

We invite you to join us as a volunteer, partner, or donor, so that we can continue to strengthen our efforts.



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*Disclaimer: This brochure is published for information only.  
Any person with tuberculosis should seek medical advice.*

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# Tuberculosis



THE BASIC FACTS



## How is TB spread?

TB in the lungs or throat can be spread to other people. The germs are put into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in the germs and become infected. People with active TB disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day, such as family members, friends, or co-workers.



## What is the difference between TB infection and active TB disease?

Most people who breathe in the TB germs and become infected are able to fight it off and keep it from growing. They have the TB germ in their body without being sick. This is often called latent TB infection or “sleeping TB.” People with *latent TB infection*:

- Have no symptoms
- Don't feel sick
- Can't spread TB to others
- Usually have a positive TB skin test reaction
- May develop *active TB disease* if they do not get proper treatment

*Active TB disease* happens when a person's immune system cannot stop the TB germs from growing. These active germs multiply, attack the body, and make a person sick. Those most at risk include babies, children, and people with a weak immune system, such as individuals with HIV, AIDS, or cancer.

## What are the signs and symptoms of TB?

Persons with active TB may:

- Have a bad cough that lasts three weeks or longer
- Cough up blood or mucus
- Feel weak or tired
- Lose weight
- Have a fever or night sweats
- Have chest pain

## Who should be tested for TB?

People who have:

- Been around someone who is known to have *active TB disease*
- Injected illegal drugs and/or shared needles
- Been infected with HIV/AIDS or another disease that weakens the immune system
- Lived or worked in homeless shelters, prisons, jails, or nursing homes
- Moved from an area with high rates of TB
- Symptoms of *active TB disease*



## How is TB diagnosed and treated?

The most common tool for diagnosing TB is a simple skin test. If a TB test is positive, further tests, such as a chest x-ray, may be needed. TB is treated with medicines. People with TB will have to take these medicines for many months to make sure all the TB germs are gone from their bodies.

## Is TB still a problem today?

Despite better treatment, TB is still a very serious disease worldwide. It is estimated that one-third of the world's population is infected with TB. Today, there are also strains of TB that are resistant to medicines. People who do not take their TB medicine regularly, or do not finish all of their medicine, are at risk for getting these strains.

For more information, visit our website at [www.breathenh.org](http://www.breathenh.org) or call 1.800.835.8647.