



Patient Information

Tuberculosis



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Preface

This brochure contains information on tuberculosis. If you still have questions after reading this brochure, do not hesitate to ask them. Your doctor and nurses will gladly give you more information.

Information on tuberculosis

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease caused by the tuberculosis bacteria or the Koch bacillus. The most common form of this disease is pulmonary tuberculosis. Sometimes the kidneys, bones, brains, glands or other organs are also affected.

How does tuberculosis spread?

Tuberculosis is almost exclusively spread through the air. People with contagious (open) pulmonary tuberculosis release tuberculosis bacteria in the air when they cough, speak or sneeze. People in the close vicinity of the patient may inhale the bacteria. When the inhaled bacteria enter the lungs, they cause minor inflammation, which usually heals spontaneously. With some people, the inflammation can spread further. The bacteria can also enter other organs via the blood or the lymphatic system. Tuberculosis is almost never spread by objects (cutlery, clothing, books, bedding).

Who can be infected with tuberculosis?

Anyone can catch tuberculosis. Young children and people with reduced resistance are more vulnerable.

What are the symptoms of tuberculosis?

The most common complaints of active tuberculosis are a persistent cough, often accompanied by phlegm, loss of appetite, weight loss, chest pain, (high) fever, night sweats and fatigue.

The complaints do not necessarily have to occur all at the same time and it is even possible that someone does not show any of these symptoms but still has tuberculosis!

How is tuberculosis diagnosed in AZT?

This can be done by:

- a chest x-ray taken at the medical imaging department
- bronchoscopy: we insert a small flexible tube through the nose or mouth and into the lungs.

Treatment

When is someone contagious to his / her environment?

One is contagious if a phlegm test reveals the presence of tuberculosis bacteria (open pulmonary tuberculosis).

A closed lung tuberculosis or a tuberculosis infestation of another body (outside the lungs) generally is not contagious.

If the treatment is well followed over a period of two weeks, coughing and contagiousness will decrease, but the disease is not cured yet.

Isolation can then most probably be discontinued.

Can tuberculosis be cured?

Yes, tuberculosis can be cured completely.

Treatment usually consists of a combination of three or four medicines (tuberculostatics). The medication must be taken for at least six months because tuberculosis bacteria are difficult to destroy. Failure to follow the treatment correctly may lead to relapse and development of resistant bacteria.

Precautions

Avoid transmission

- Good cough hygiene reduces the chance of infecting others. Turn away your face and cough in a paper handkerchief with your hand covering your mouth. Handkerchiefs are binned after a single use.
- The room should be thoroughly cleaned every day.

Isolation precautions

In the hospital, we try to prevent the spreading of tuberculosis by treating infected patients in isolation.

Even if contagiousness has not yet been confirmed but can be suspected, patients will be kept in isolation.

- During your time in hospital, you will be treated in a single room equipped with air treatment.
- The room door must stay closed.
- Hospital staff entering your room wear a mask, an apron and gloves.
- As a patient, please also put a FFP2 mask on every time someone enters the room.
- You are not allowed to leave the room, except for tests or treatment. Always wear a mask and wash your hands first before disinfecting them with hand alcohol. The room door must also always remain closed during your stay.

Contact examination

People from the close environment of a patient with infectious pulmonary tuberculosis, will be examined to find out whether they are infected by the patient or maybe are ill themselves. This is coordinated by the Federal Public Health Service.

Visitors

Every visitor must comply properly with the 'precautions to be taken' as prescribed on the isolation card posted on the room door.

- You are asked to pay extra attention to proper hand hygiene. All visitors are asked to disinfect their hands every time they enter and / or leave the room.
- Visitors must always wear a high filtration capacity TB mask (FFP2 mask) when entering the room.
- Visitors are not allowed to use the toilet in the room.
- Your visitor should remove dirty laundry in a well-closed bag. Clothes must be washed at the highest possible temperature.
- Visitors will be asked not to visit other patients in the hospital immediately after visiting you.
- Visits by weakened persons or babies are not recommended and best avoided.

Finally

We realise that all this may be unpleasant for you, but we hope that we can count on your understanding towards these precautions.

If you still have any questions or comments after reading this brochure, please contact your attending physician. We sincerely hope that this brochure has made things clearer to you.

Personal notes / questions

If you have any questions or observations, you can record them here. That way, you always have them on hand when you are talking to the doctor or nurse.

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