

Tuberculosis (TB) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

What is TB?

A bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* causes Tuberculosis (TB). Typically TB attacks the lungs but it can involve other parts of the body such as the spine, brain and kidneys. If not treated appropriately, TB can be fatal.

How is TB spread?

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. TB is NOT spread by shaking hands, sharing food or drink, touching bed linens or toilet seats and kissing.

What are the symptoms of TB?

Symptoms include bad cough lasting at least three weeks, chest pain, coughing up blood or sputum, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, lack of appetite, fever, chills and night sweats.

How can I be tested for TB?

There are two kinds of tests that are used to detect TB bacteria in the body: the TB skin test (TST) and TB blood tests. These tests can be given by KSU Student Health Services and Cobb County Public Health Department. If you have a positive reaction to either of the tests, you will be given other tests to see if you have latent TB infection or TB disease.

What if the test is negative?

In most cases this means you are not infected. However, a skin test may take up to two to ten weeks after exposure to become positive. If the TB blood test (IGRA) is negative, you are not infected.

What if the test is positive?

A positive skin test or blood test usually means that you have been infected with the TB germ. It does not necessarily mean that you have TB disease. Other tests, such as an x-ray or sputum sample, are needed to see if you have TB disease.

What is the difference between latent TB infection and TB disease?

Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. Latent TB is when the TB bacteria live in a person's body without making them sick. People with latent TB infection are not infectious, feel well and cannot spread TB to others. However, TB bacteria can become active in the body, at which time the person will go from having latent TB to being sick with TB. TB disease is when the bacteria are active in the body, causing a person to feel ill. During this time people are able to spread TB to those they spend the most time with during the day.

Can TB be treated?

Through strict adherence to medications for both latent infection and disease, TB can be treated and cured.

Where can I find more information regarding TB?

On the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention TB web page at <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/>.