

Tuberculosis (TB): What You Need to Know

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection that most commonly affects the lungs. It can sound worrying, but TB is treatable and curable, and all testing and treatment are free in the UK.

How TB spreads

TB spreads through the air when someone with active TB in their lungs coughs or sneezes. It usually requires close, regular contact over time. You cannot catch TB from sharing plates, touching, or casual contact.



Why early testing matters

Getting tested early helps to protect your health, prevent TB from spreading & ensures treatment starts before symptoms worsen. You can be tested even if you feel well — some people have latent TB, meaning the bacteria are present but inactive.

Breaking down stigma

TB is an infection like many others. Anyone can get it, even if you have good personal hygiene and look after yourself well. Talking about TB reduces stigma which helps people feel safe to come forward for testing and treatment.

What people need to know

- TB is treatable — modern antibiotics are very effective when taken for the full course.
- Testing and treatment are free — there is no charge for anyone, regardless of immigration status.
- TB care is confidential — health services do not share information with the Home Office.
- Getting tested or treated will NOT affect an asylum claim or immigration case — seeking healthcare is safe and encouraged.
- You are not alone — friends, support workers, or community members can attend appointments with you if you wish.

SYMPTOMS OF TB IN THE LUNGS (PULMONARY TB)

TB usually affects the lungs. The most common signs of TB in the lungs are:

- **A cough lasting 3 weeks or more - sometimes with mucus or blood**
- **Chest pain or discomfort**
- **Coughing up blood or mucus**
- **Feeling very tired or weak**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Unexplained weight loss**
- **Fever or chills**
- **Night sweats**



These symptoms tend to come on gradually rather than suddenly.

SUPPORT DURING TREATMENT

Treatment usually lasts several months, and having support makes it easier. Friends, family, or community members can:

- **remind you about appointments**
- **go with you to clinics**
- **help with daily routines during treatment**

