Annex

About Tuberculosis

TB is caused by a type of bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB disease usually affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body. Symptoms of TB include a persistent cough that lasts more than three weeks, low-grade fever, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss and chest pain.

2. TB is spread when the person suffering from TB coughs the TB bacteria into the air, and the bacteria is inhaled by those who have close and prolonged contact with an infectious individual. Transmission of the TB bacteria usually requires prolonged exposure (days to weeks, rather than minutes to hours).

3. A person cannot get TB from sharing cups, eating utensils, food, or cigarettes. TB is not spread through shaking someone's hand, kissing, touching bed linens or toilet seats.

4. The TB vaccine (Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG)) given at birth is only effective at preventing the serious forms of TB (such as TB meningitis) in young children. It does not protect against lung TB in adults.

TB infection

5. When a person is exposed to the TB bacteria from an infectious TB case, they may develop TB infection. Persons with TB infection do not have symptoms of TB (e.g. cough) and they do not spread TB to others. The TB bacteria remains inactive in their body in the vast majority of healthy adults with TB infection.

6. In about 10 percent of persons with TB infection, TB disease may develop at some point during the course of their lifetime. About half of such persons do so in the first two years after acquiring TB infection. The risk of developing TB disease is higher in persons with a weak immune system and young children under five years of age.

7. TB infection is not uncommon in Singaporeans. The prevalence of TB infection increases with age, ranging from 2% among persons aged 18 to 29 years to 29% among those aged 70 to 79 years.

Treatment of TB

8. Persons with TB disease will be started on treatment. Persons who do not adhere to their medications have a higher chance of developing drug resistance, treatment failure, and future disease relapse. Directly Observed Treatment (DOT) therefore remains a pillar of TB treatment. DOT consists of daily administration of TB medicines by a trained nurse to the patient. To prevent disruption to TB treatment, patients are counselled on the importance of adhering to DOT for the entire duration of their treatment regimen. It is in the best interest of the patient and the community that TB patients adhere to the recommended treatment protocol.

9. Persons found to have TB infection will be offered treatment if suitable, to reduce their risk of developing TB disease in the future.