

WHAT'S THE CAUSE OF TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a type of bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

It's spread when a person with active TB disease in their lungs coughs or sneezes and someone else inhales the expelled droplets, which contain TB bacteria.

Although TB is spread in a similar way to a cold or flu, it is not as contagious.

You would have to spend prolonged periods (several hours) in close contact with an infected person to catch the infection yourself.

For example, TB infections usually spread between family members who live in the same house. It would be highly unlikely for you to become infected by sitting next to an infected person on, for instance, a bus or train.

Not everyone with TB is infectious. Children with TB or people with a TB infection that occurs outside the lungs (extrapulmonary TB) do not spread the infection.

LATENT OR ACTIVE TB

In most healthy people, the immune system is able to destroy the bacteria that cause TB.

But in some cases, the bacteria infect the body but do not cause any symptoms (latent TB), or the infection begins to cause symptoms within weeks, months or even years (active TB).

Up to 10% of people with latent TB eventually develop active TB years after the initial infection.

This usually happens either within the first year or two of infection, or when the immune system is weakened for example, if someone is having chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

THE OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE TUBERCULOSIS ARE

-Using substances.

Like IV drugs or excessive alcohol use weakens your immune system and makes you more vulnerable to tuberculosis.

-Using tobacco.

Greatly increases the risk of getting TB and dying of it.

-Working in health care.

Or regular contact with people who are ill increases your chances of exposure to TB bacteria.

-Living or working.

In a residential care facility. People who live or work in prisons, homeless shelters, psychiatric hospitals or nursing homes are all at a higher risk of tuberculosis due to overcrowding and poor ventilation.

-Living with someone infected with TB.

And close contact with someone who has TB increases your risk.