

# STOP TB: it's in your hands

## Learning about how to be safe from TB

### My doctor tells me I might have Tuberculosis. What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease and not a hereditary disease or a curse of God. Any person can get TB.

The good news is it can be cured allowing you and your family to continue with a happy life. The most important thing is to be aware of the symptoms and whether any of these symptoms persist beyond three weeks.

The symptoms for TB that even you can identify are:

- Cough for more than three weeks (most important)
- Fever, especially that rises in the evening
- Pain in the chest
- Breathlessness or difficulty breathing
- Weight loss – more than 10% in a year without a change in lifestyle
- Coughing of blood/ blood in sputum
- Loss of appetite
- Night sweats.

### Who is susceptible? How does TB spread?

Anyone can get TB, a bacterium that goes from person to person through the air. It does not see the boundaries of cast or creed. Whether rich or poor, obese or thin, everyone is at risk – it makes no difference – you can still get TB.

### What should I do now?

Don't despair. Tuberculosis is curable. Tell a trusted friend, your supervisor or the company doctor.

### If I have TB how can I prevent others close to me from getting it?

- Take regular and complete treatment
- Always cover your mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing
- Do not spit indiscriminately
- At home you should spit in a box covered by a lid
- Dispose of the spit or sputum by burning it.

It is very important not to get scared or to hide the disease whenever someone develops the symptoms of TB.

### How can I make sure my treatment is successful?

You must follow DOTS – the cornerstone strategy of TB control. And it is **free**.

We know that when people with TB take a full course of treatment following DOTS, the chances of a cure are 100%. If you don't follow DOTS, the chances are much lower.

### What is DOT?

DOT involves a person you trust and feel comfortable with – your company doctor, your supervisor, a co-worker, your neighbour or another trained person (not a family member) – who watches you swallow anti-TB drugs. Trust your DOT provider and ensure that your treatment is completed.

### How long will my treatment take?

Treatment of TB may take six to eight months (and sometimes more) of regular intake of a combination of four to five powerful anti-TB drugs. Whether you take the drugs regularly or not will depend on how serious you are about curing your illness. If you do not take the drugs as prescribed, your illness will worsen. You

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could also infect members of your family. It is also very possible that the usual drugs will no longer work as you would have developed a resistance to them. This is most dangerous.

## Will I have to go to hospital or stop working?

Treatment of TB does not normally entail hospitalization or leave from work. But it does mean adhering to a strict discipline in taking the medicines regularly without fail. There are no short-cuts to therapy, however well you may feel after you have taken a few days of treatment. With timely diagnosis and regular and complete treatment, you *can* remain healthy and needn't lose work days or income.

## What should I eat?

As per one's liking, you can eat any type of food. Good diets help recover strength and energy quickly.

## What are the things I should avoid?

A patient of TB should avoid the consumption of bidis, cigarettes, hookah, tobacco, alcohol or any other intoxicating drug. There is no reason to stop your sexual life or sharing food or cutlery with friends and family members.

Also remember your duty does not end merely in making yourself well again. If there are others in your family or community who need treatment, help them get it.

## I heard the doctor tell another worker that he has MDR TB - what is that?

MDR TB, i.e. multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, is a specific form of drug resistant TB (due to bacilli resistant to two of the most powerful anti-TB drugs). It is possible to cure though costly drugs need to be taken for 18-24 months. You are likely to become resistant to the drugs prescribed to you if you do not take them regularly and stop the treatment without completing it. In other words, the tuberculosis bacteria in your body will stop responding to these medicines and you will then have to take other medicines.



### Points to remember:

- Report to your doctor or supervisor if you have a persistent cough for three weeks or more.
- Get three sputum smears examined.
- Do not despair if you have TB – IT IS CURABLE.
- Regular and complete treatment under supervision can cure TB.