



# **TB Awareness Month**

## **March 2023**



**PAN-AFRICAN**  
MANAGED CARE

# TB Awareness Month

The South African Government has announced March as TB Awareness Month, with the purpose of raising public awareness of Tuberculosis as anyone, especially a child, is at risk of contracting TB. It is important to educate and raise understanding of one of the world's deadliest infectious killers.

## What is Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious bacterial infection that affects the lungs and respiratory system. Other organs that may be infected are the spine, brain or kidneys. There are two types of TB, namely:

- Latent TB infection: the bacteria may live in your body without making you feel sick, therefore no symptoms will be experienced.
- TB disease: the bacteria becomes active if the immune system is not strong enough to stop it from multiplying.



## Ways that TB is spread

TB is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that is spread from person to person. TB can be spread when inhaling the water droplets of a cough or sneeze through the air. Therefore people nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. TB also spreads faster in confined spaces.

## Ways that TB is not spread

TB is not spread transmitted by surface contact:

- Shaking someone's hand
- Toilets
- Sharing food or drink
- Sharing toothbrushes
- Kissing and hugging



## **Risk factors for TB**

People who are at a higher risk of becoming infected are those who have a weakened immune system:

- HIV positive
- Cancer

## **Symptoms**

- Coughing for three or more weeks
- Weakness and fatigue
- Weight loss
- No appetite
- Chills
- Fever
- Sweating at night



## **When to consult a doctor**

Should you notice any symptoms and you suspect that you have been in contact with someone who was infected, it is advisable to consult a doctor and possibly get tested for Tuberculosis. High risk individuals are advised to go for a TB screening should there be any symptoms.

## **Treatment**

Medication for TB is free at clinics and the full course of treatment is from six to eight months depending on the resistance of the disease. It is crucial to complete the course in order to be cured of TB. Skipping doses will prolong the curing process and increase the risk of the TB bacterium mutating.

## Preventions

Many NGOs and other campaigns assist the Government in performing preventative actions such as health professionals identifying communities that have individuals who are diagnosed with TB. They also perform contact tracing of patients who have TB and test those who have been in contact. Other preventative measures you can perform personally are:

- Keeping your room well-ventilated
- Exercising cough etiquette
- Begin with treatment
- Wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth
- Notify your close contacts so that they are screened for TB



## References

- Mayo clinic - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tuberculosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351250>
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- South African Government - <https://www.gov.za/faq/health/what-tb-and-where-can-i-get-treatment>
- National Institute for communicable diseases - <https://www.nicd.ac.za/tb-frequently-asked-questions/>
- The Borgen Project - <https://borgenproject.org/tuberculosis-in-south-africa-5-things-to-know/>
- Centers for Disease control and prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/tbinfectiondisease.htm>