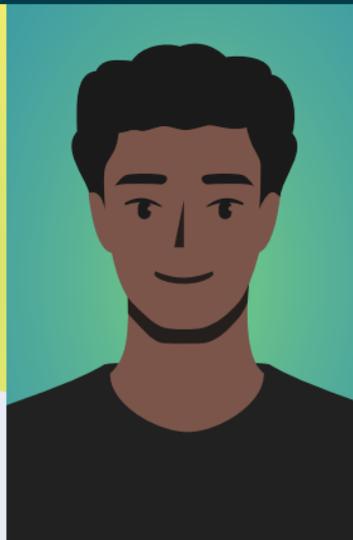


Talking About Tuberculosis Infection



Introduction

Millions of people worldwide have tuberculosis (TB) infection. A person can have TB bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) in their body, but the person may not feel sick. This is called TB infection. When the TB bacteria grow and the person begins having symptoms, that is when the infection has developed into active TB disease, **a serious illness.**

Learning that you have TB infection can be scary – especially because of misinformation about TB infection and active TB disease. Some people may feel shame, fear or stigmatized about having TB infection and active TB disease. Friends and family may show disapproval. They may exclude a person with TB from activities. **This can come from not having all the facts. This guide provides you with ways to talk to your health care provider, loved ones and community about TB infection and active TB disease.**

If someone says this...	Say this...
 Myth	 Fact
<p>TB infection and active TB disease are not curable.</p>	<p>TB infection and active TB disease are curable with the right treatment. “I am taking medicine for TB infection to prevent me from developing active TB disease, a serious illness.”</p>
<p>You should not be around your family or friends if you have TB infection.</p>	<p>TB infection is not contagious. You cannot “catch” TB from a person who has TB infection. However, active TB disease is contagious. Taking medicine for TB infection protects you from developing active TB disease.</p>
<p>You can get active TB disease if you share food or use the same utensils with someone who has active TB disease.</p>	<p>You cannot get active TB disease by sharing utensils. The TB bacteria are spread through the air. When a person who is sick with active TB disease coughs, sneezes or speaks, they put TB bacteria in the air. People may breathe in the TB bacteria and become sick.</p>

“I take my TB infection medicine to stay healthy for me and my loved ones and to make sure I do not develop active TB disease.”

If someone says this...	Say this...
 Myth	 Fact
<p>I got the Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine (a vaccine for TB). Can I still get TB infection or develop active TB disease?</p>	<p>Even if you have had the BCG vaccination as a child, you are still at risk of getting TB infection or developing active TB disease. You should get tested even if you have had the BCG vaccination as a child because it does not continue to protect adults from getting TB infection. If you have had the BCG vaccination, you should ask for a blood-based TB test from your provider, not the skin test. The blood-based test will let you know if you have TB infection even if you have been vaccinated before.</p>
<p>TB infection and active TB disease only happen to certain people because of their lifestyle or income level.</p> <p>TB infection and active TB disease are punishments because you did something wrong.</p>	<p>Anyone can become infected if they are exposed to the bacteria that cause TB. Having TB infection, or even active TB disease, has nothing to do with anyone’s behavior or social class.</p>

If someone says this...	Say this...
 Myth	 Fact
<p>Active TB disease is something my grandparents' generation had to worry about. It is not a problem now.</p>	<p>TB is still a problem in the U.S. and worldwide. TB is one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide – even higher than HIV/AIDS. In the U.S., 13 million people are estimated to have TB infection.¹</p>
<p>People with TB infection or active TB disease have to live in special hospitals and away from their families.</p>	<p>People do not have to live in special hospitals because they have TB infection and active TB disease. That happened in the past because we did not have medicine to treat TB infection and active TB disease. Now we have treatment for TB infection and active TB disease. I can take my treatment for TB infection from my home.</p>

“I have TB infection. I have no symptoms and I do not feel sick. I am not contagious. I need to get treatment so I do not get active TB disease, a serious illness.”

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Data and Statistics. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/statistics/default.htm>.

If someone says this...	Say this...
 Myth	 Fact
<p>I would get screened, but screening and treatment are too expensive.</p>	<p>NYC Health Department TB Chest Centers provide testing and treatment at no cost. Talk to your provider about getting a referral.</p>
<p>If I get screened and they find out I have TB infection or active TB disease, my provider will report me. I am worried that I might be deported.</p>	<p>The NYC Health Department offers their services without asking for insurance or immigration status. All their records are confidential.</p>
<p>It is not necessary to take medicine if you have no symptoms.</p>	<p>Even though I do not have symptoms, there are still TB bacteria in my body. It is best to take medicine for TB infection so that I do not develop active TB disease, a serious illness.</p>
<p>Treatment for TB infection and active TB disease can kill you.</p>	<p>Treatment for TB infection and active TB disease will not kill you. Some people may experience side effects when taking treatment. It is important to get treatment as soon as you know you have TB infection to prevent active TB disease, a serious illness that may kill you if untreated.</p>

If you learn that you have TB infection:

- Talk to your provider and understand TB.
- Talk about TB infection and active TB disease with your family, friends and community.

Active TB disease and COVID-19 both affect the lungs and are spread by close contact between people. Active TB disease and COVID-19 spread through air when you cough, sneeze or speak. Both have similar symptoms and can be mistaken for one or the other. Contact your provider to learn more.

For more information about TB infection and TB disease, visit nyc.gov/health/tb. For more information about COVID-19 symptoms, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus. For peer support, visit the We Are TB Survivor's Network at wearetb.com.