

TB is curable

There's plenty of information, help and support available for people who are affected by TB



WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

There's plenty of impartial help and support available. If you are worried that you might have TB, make sure to get tested. If you have been diagnosed with TB, get support to help you take your medication. It is really important to get better and not to develop drug-resistance or pass TB on to others.

Find & Treat

Phone: 020 7734 2972
Covers London with a mobile x-ray unit and TB outreach services

TB Alert information service

Phone: 01273 234770
Email: info@tbalert.org
www.thetruthabouttb.org
Support and advice for people concerned about TB

TB Action Group (TBAG)

Phone: 01273 234770
www.tb-alert.healthunlocked.com
A peer support and advocacy group for people affected by TB

Westminster Drug Project (WDP)

Phone: 0207 421 3100
www.wdp-drugs.org.uk
Email: enquiries@wdp-drugs.org.uk
WDP is a charity providing drug and alcohol services in London and the South East of England

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk
Information about TB and a service finder, such as where to find the nearest A&E Department, etc.

National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA)

Phone: 0207 972 1999
www.nta.nhs.uk
NTA helps people experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol problems.

This leaflet was developed in partnership by TB Alert and Westminster Drug Project

THE TRUTH ABOUT TB

The Truth About TB
for people who are dependent on drugs and alcohol



www.thetruthabouttb.org

WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS (TB)?

TB is a curable illness caused by airborne bacteria (germs). The number of people getting ill with TB in the UK is increasing. You are more at risk of getting TB if you drink heavily, smoke heavily or take drugs, as this weakens your immune system.

HOW DO YOU GET TB?

When someone with infectious TB coughs or sneezes, they send droplets into the air that contain TB germs. If you breathe these in you are at risk of getting TB. Usually, your immune system will wipe out the germs that you have breathed in. Even if it doesn't get rid of them, there's only a small chance you will become ill right away. The germs can stay asleep in your body, so you will not be ill or able to infect other people. But if your immune system has been weakened by heavy drinking and drug taking you are more likely to develop TB.

SYMPTOMS

TB is most likely to affect the lungs, but it can affect any part of the body. Common symptoms to look out for are:

- a cough that lasts for over three weeks
- weight loss
- fever
- night sweats
- extreme tiredness

Symptoms of TB can appear slowly and you may not show all the symptoms at the same time.

If you use alcohol or drugs and you do catch TB, you may think the symptoms are the effects of alcohol or drugs on your body.



AM I LIKELY TO GET TB?

Anyone can get TB, but people who use drugs and alcohol excessively are at more risk because:

- Alcohol and drugs damage a person's body and weaken their defences against illnesses such as TB.
- People who are dependent on alcohol and drugs may not have a good diet and may not get the nutrients they need to stay healthy.
- Places such as crowded or poorly ventilated homes and social venues make it easier for TB to spread.
- You may be around other people who have TB but don't know it: that means they don't know they are passing it to others.
- Drug and alcohol users may find it harder to take regular TB treatment, and therefore remain infectious or develop drug resistant TB. Drug-resistant TB is much harder to treat and is likely to be infectious for longer periods of time.

WHAT ACTION SHOULD YOU TAKE

If you have any symptoms that could indicate TB, you should:

- see a doctor (GP) and tell them you are worried about TB.

If you don't have a doctor, you should:

- go to the nearest NHS drop in centre and also ask how to register with a GP (see the information and support at the back of this leaflet)

If you are seriously ill – go to the nearest A&E department.

If you are engaged in a drug and alcohol service, you can ask your support worker for advice.

The longer you leave it, the worse you will feel and the more likely it is that you will have serious problems or pass TB on to others.

In London, you can visit the mobile x-ray unit (MXU) for a free TB screening. To find out if the MXU is screening nearby, contact the Find & Treat team on 020 7734 2972.

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