

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. *Tubercle bacilli* that cause tuberculosis are carried in very small droplets. These droplets are infectious and can be produced whenever a person with tuberculosis breathes. Infection occurs when a susceptible person (i.e., a person with a weakened immune system) inhales the infectious droplets. It most commonly affects the lungs, although it may be found in the larynx, spine, kidneys, as well as other parts of the body.

Symptoms of TB may be:

- Fatigue
- Weight Loss
- Fever
- Chills
- Night Sweats
- Persistent Cough
- Chest Pain
- Coughing up Blood

Anyone can get TB, but some people are at higher risk. They include:

- The Homeless
- Poor People
- Alcoholics
- Nursing Home Residents
- Prison Inmates
- People with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or people with a depressed immune system

There is a difference between *TB infection* and *TB disease*. A person with TB infection (without disease) has the germ that cause TB in their body. The germ lies inactive in their body and cannot spread to others. However, they may develop the active disease in the future. A person with TB disease, on the other hand, is sick and usually has one or more of the symptoms of TB. They can affect others.

Treatment for TB may include several drugs, which may have to be taken for several months. It is very important that the medicines for TB be taken the length of time prescribed.

Health Tips

One of the tests used to check for TB is a *TB skin test*. It is given by injecting *tuberculin* just under the skin on the inside of the arm. The person must then return in 48 to 72 hours to see if there is a reaction to the test. If so, the size of the reaction is measured. You can get a TB skin test from your family doctor or local health department.

Number of reported cases of active TB in Claiborne County for 1994 to 1998 as Reported by the Claiborne County Health Department:

1994: 2 cases

1995: 1 case

1996: 3 cases

1997: 1 case

1998: 2 cases

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.

Copyright © Claiborne County Hospital, 1999-2000