



AWARENESS

TB AWARE OR NOT TB AWARE?

The 24th of March is World TB Awareness Day. Are you aware of who is at risk of this disease? Anyone can get tuberculosis (TB) at any age. However, some groups of people are at higher risk of getting active TB disease.

The groups that are at high risk include:

- People who have not been immunised or vaccinated (vaccination against TB is routinely included in child immunisation schedules).
- People with HIV infection.
- People in close contact with those known to be infectious with TB (particularly if those with TB do not take their medication as prescribed).
- People with medical conditions that make the body less able to protect itself from disease (for example: diabetes, the dust disease silicosis, or people undergoing treatment with drugs that can suppress the immune system, such as long-term use of Cortisone and related medicines).
- People from countries with high TB rates (particularly if those countries are experiencing high rates or drug-resistant TB).
- People who work in or are residents of long-term care facilities serving patients with or at risk for TB (nursing homes, prisons, some hospitals).
- Health care workers and others working in nursing homes, prisons, some hospitals.

- People who are malnourished (get inadequate nutrients from their diet).
- Alcoholics who may be run down and living in environments that involve close contact with infected persons.

How do I know if I have it?

A person with TB infection may have no symptoms. A person with TB disease may have any, all or none of the following symptoms:

- A cough that will not go away.
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Weight loss.
- Loss of appetite.
- Fever.
- Coughing up blood.
- Night sweats.

These symptoms can also happen with other types of lung disease, so it is important to see a doctor and to let the doctor determine if you have TB.

It is also important to remember that a person with TB disease may feel perfectly healthy or may only have a cough from time to time. If you think you have been exposed to TB, you'd be best advised to get a TB skin test and/or an x-ray of your chest.