



# TB is curable. Testing is simple. Treatment is free.\*

\*The Fairfax County Health Department offers FREE TB treatment to residents of Fairfax County, Falls Church and the City of Fairfax.

## The Truth About Tuberculosis

**MYTH:** People will get infected with Tuberculosis (TB) if someone shares food, eating utensils, clothes, or shakes hands with a person infected with TB.

**TRUTH:** No, TB is spread through the air. TB bacteria get into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

**MYTHS:** TB is inherited. TB is a punishment for bad behavior. TB is easy to catch.

**TRUTHS:** NO! A person is infected with TB by breathing in TB bacteria. A person must be exposed to TB bacteria for an extended period of time – usually in an enclosed area – to become infected.

**MYTH:** There is no way to diagnose TB infection.

**TRUTH:** Not true, a TB skin test is a quick, simple way to see if you have been infected with TB. A positive skin test does **NOT** mean that you are sick or contagious. A positive skin test means that you have been **infected** and that your body is producing antibodies to the disease. A positive skin test means you **MUST** see your doctor or Health Department for further testing, usually a chest x-ray.

**MYTH:** TB infection is not curable.

**TRUTH:** Yes, it is! Prescription medication for TB is given to persons who test positive for TB, even before they become ill. TB medication is usually given in pill form and is remarkably safe and effective. It must be taken every day for 9 months. If TB is not treated, or you do not take all of your medications properly, the disease can cause serious health problems, even death.

**MYTH:** TB vaccine (known as BCG vaccine) prevents TB infection and TB disease.

**TRUTH:** Not true! The vaccine only prevents serious complications of TB disease in children however, it does **NOT** prevent TB disease in adults.

**MYTH:** TB vaccine always results in a positive Tuberculin skin test.

**TRUTH:** Not true! If the vaccine is given shortly after birth, the skin test is most often negative, even after one year of age. The most common cause of a positive skin test is infection with TB bacteria.

**MYTH:** TB disease is a disease of the poor.

**TRUTH:** Not true! Anyone can get TB infection and disease since TB is easily spread through the air.

### Know the Symptoms of TB

To protect yourself and your family, be familiar with the signs and symptoms of TB disease:

- Loss of weight
- Coughing, especially coughing up mucus or blood
- Feeling weak
- Night sweats
- Loss of appetite
- Chest pain
- Fever for more than a week

**If you or a family member are experiencing any of these symptoms, contact your local Health Department.**

### Questions or Concerns?

Contact the Fairfax County Health Department

703-246-2411 TTY 711

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/comdis/tb.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/comdis/tb.htm)

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