

# You Could Have TB!

**You** may have been around a person with tuberculosis disease (TB). Local health departments are required to talk to every person who has had close contact with a person with TB disease. TB is a serious disease that can damage the lungs or other parts of the body. This is why you must be checked as soon as possible.

TB is spread by being in a room or small space for a long time with a person who is sick with TB disease. It is spread through the air when someone who is sick with TB of the lungs coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks. You can become infected by breathing the germs into your lungs. You cannot get TB if you are outside with a person who has TB.

There are two types of TB: **latent TB infection** and **TB disease**.

## **Latent TB Infection**

A person has **latent TB infection** if they have a positive TB skin test and a normal (negative) chest x-ray. This means the person has breathed in the TB germs, but his or her body has been able to fight the germs. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick and do not have signs of TB disease. They cannot spread TB to others. About one out of every three people in the world has latent TB infection. One out of every 10 healthy people with latent TB infection will become sick with TB disease at some time in their lives. People with latent TB infection are given medicine to reduce their chances of getting TB disease in the future. In North Carolina, the medicines are free from your local health department.

## **TB Disease**

A person has **TB disease** if she or he has a positive TB skin test and a chest x-ray that is positive (not normal). A person with TB disease feels sick and can spread TB to others. TB disease can be cured with medicine. People who have TB disease must take medicines for at least six months to cure the disease. In North Carolina, the medicines are free from local health departments.

## **TB Testing**

The nurse will ask if you are having any symptoms of TB. Then the nurse will put a little test fluid just under the skin on your arm. You must come back in two to three days to have your arm checked. The nurse will tell you the results of your test. If your TB test is negative and you have no symptoms of TB, you must come back for another TB skin test in eight (8) weeks. If the second TB test is negative, you will not need to do anything else.

If your skin test is positive, you must get a chest x-ray. If your chest x-ray is normal and you have no symptoms of TB, you should still take medicine to reduce your chance of getting TB disease in the future. The medicine is free from your local health department.

If your skin test is positive and your chest x-ray is positive (not normal), you could have TB disease. If the doctor says you have TB, you will be given medicine. The medicine is free from your local health department.

**North Carolina law says you MUST complete all of the testing for TB.**

**Remember:**

- Only people who are sick with TB disease can spread TB.
- TB can be cured and prevented with the right medicines.
- If you have latent TB infection, you will be given free medicine to lower your chance of becoming sick with TB disease later on.
- If you have TB disease, you will be given free medicine to cure your TB.

If you have questions, please call your TB nurse, \_\_\_\_\_,

at \_\_\_\_\_.

Clinic information: