



Tuberculosis Fact Sheet

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually affect the lungs. But TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. TB disease was once the leading cause of death in the United States.

What is multi drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB)?

Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR TB) is TB that is resistant to at least two of the best anti-TB drugs, isoniazid and rifampin. These drugs are considered first-line drugs and are used to treat all persons with TB disease.

What is extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR TB)?

Extensively drug resistant TB (XDR TB) is a rare type of MDR TB. XDR TB is defined as TB which is resistant to first line drugs, plus resistant to any fluoroquinolone and at least one of three injectable second-line drugs.

XDR TB is of special concern for persons with HIV infection or other conditions that can weaken the immune system. These persons are more likely to develop TB disease once they are infected, and also have a higher risk of death once they develop TB.

Who is at risk for getting MDR TB?

Drug resistance is more common in people who:

- do not take their TB medicine regularly
- do not take all of their TB medicine as told by their doctor or nurse
- develop active TB disease again, after having taken TB medicine in the past
- come from areas of the world where drug-resistant TB is common
- have spent time with someone known to have drug-resistant TB disease

How are employees exposed to Tuberculosis?

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria become airborne when a person with active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

However, not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. People who are not sick have latent TB infection. People who have latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not have any symptoms, and cannot spread TB to others. But, some people with latent TB infection go on to get TB disease.

People with active TB disease can be treated and cured if they seek medical help. Even better, people with latent TB infection can take medicine so that they will not develop active TB disease.

What should I do to protect myself?

Personal protective equipment should be used to prevent or minimize exposure. Eye protection such as goggles or a face shield may be necessary. Employees who are exposed to persons with suspect or active Tuberculosis must, at a minimum, wear an N-95 respirator. A higher level of respiratory protection such as a full-face respirator may be necessary in certain situations such as when an employee must enter the isolation room of a patient with active TB.

Are there OSHNC standards for Tuberculosis?

No, there are no OSHNC standards for TB. OSHNC enforces the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) document "*Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis in Healthcare Settings, 1994*," contained in Appendix A of the compliance directive [CPL 2.106](#). Tuberculosis issues are cited using North Carolina General Statute 95-129(1), commonly referred to as the "general duty clause"

Where can I find additional information?

[Tuberculosis Subject Index page](#)

[Centers for Disease Control website](#)