

## World Tuberculosis Day

Every year on March 24, the world celebrates World Tuberculosis Day.

Tuberculosis is a common infectious disease caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacterium.

Tuberculosis is transmitted by airborne droplets.

You can become infected from an infected person. When coughing, sneezing, or talking, tiny particles of sputum are released into the air by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, infecting healthy people. On average, one infectious person can infect 15-20 susceptible people per year.

Cattle and birds also suffer from tuberculosis.

The disease most often affects the lungs, but can also affect the bones and joints, genitourinary system, eyes, intestines, and meninges.

Tuberculosis infection does not always lead to disease. This depends on many factors: the state of the immune system; age; the presence of underlying conditions; adequate nutrition; and working and living conditions. Stress and depression negatively impact the immune system, which can contribute to the development of the disease. Bad habits (smoking, alcohol abuse, and drug use) also reduce the body's resistance to tuberculosis.

How is tuberculosis not transmitted?

- Tuberculosis is not carried by insects;
- They cannot be infected through blood;
- Tuberculosis is not transmitted through water.

Tuberculosis can be suspected in a person by the following symptoms: prolonged cough or hacking cough (more than 3 weeks) with the release of sputum, possibly with blood; chest pain; decreased or lack of appetite, weight loss; increased sweating (especially at night); general malaise and weakness; periodic slight increase in body temperature (up to  $37.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  -  $37.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ); the appearance of shortness of breath with little physical exertion.

One way to detect tuberculosis is through chest X-rays (fluorography). Chest X-rays can be performed at your local clinic.

Sputum analysis can detect *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which helps establish the active form of tuberculosis, indicates an accurate diagnosis of the disease, and indicates that the person is infectious to others.

The Mantoux tuberculin skin test is the simplest way to assess immunity to tuberculosis. A pronounced skin reaction indicates a strong immune response, meaning the body is actively interacting with the pathogen.

If a person contracts tuberculosis, treatment must begin immediately! The sooner tuberculosis is detected and treatment is started, the less organ damage and the faster the disease can be cured.

Tuberculosis patients are treated in specialized hospitals, departments, dispensaries, and offices. Patients who shed *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* into the environment are treated in hospital until they stop shedding the bacteria and are no longer dangerous to others.

To treat tuberculosis, a combination of several anti-tuberculosis drugs is prescribed, depending on the susceptibility of the tuberculosis pathogen isolated from each individual patient. Treatment lasts an average of 6-8 months.

Tuberculosis is curable if you take all prescribed medications and do not miss doses.

To prevent tuberculosis in the Republic of Belarus, children (healthy newborns) are vaccinated with BCG (BCG-M) anti-tuberculosis vaccines on days 3–5 of life. If tuberculosis infection is detected but no organ damage is detected, prophylactic treatment with anti-tuberculosis drugs is administered.

We shouldn't forget about non-specific preventative measures aimed at boosting the body's defenses. These include:

- compliance with the work and rest regime;
- rational and timely nutrition;
- giving up bad habits (smoking, drug use and alcohol abuse);
- taking multivitamins (especially in the spring);
- hardening of the body;
- compliance with personal hygiene rules, regular wet cleaning and ventilation of premises.

Tuberculosis is a curable disease, but it can only be overcome by working together. Early detection and strict adherence to the doctor's prescribed treatment regimen can completely cure it. Take care of yourself and your loved ones!

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