

IPC Newsletter June 2025

Be TB aware

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection which most commonly affects the lungs. It can spread through close contact with people who have TB and have symptoms (active TB). When someone with active TB coughs, they release small droplets containing the bacteria. You can catch TB if you regularly breathe in these droplets over a long period of time.

Some people have TB in their body but do not get ill or have any symptoms (latent TB). This type of TB cannot be spread to others, but it can turn into active TB in the future.

Anyone can get TB at any age, but some people are more likely to get it or get more seriously ill from it, including people who:

- spend a lot of time with someone who has active TB, such as people living in the same house
- were born in or lived in an area where TB is more common
- have a weakened immune system, such as people with HIV, a kidney transplant or who are having certain treatment like chemotherapy
- are under 5 years of age
- live in overcrowded or unhealthy conditions, such as people who are homeless
- regularly smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs
- have had TB before and it was not treated properly

Symptoms of tuberculosis (TB) usually come on gradually and commonly include:

- a cough that lasts more than 3 weeks – you may cough up mucus (phlegm) or mucus with blood in it
- feeling tired or exhausted
- a high temperature or night sweats
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- feeling generally unwell

If TB is suspected, there are a variety of tests available to confirm a diagnosis including blood tests, sputum samples and chest Xray.

Once detected, TB is treated with a long course of antibiotics (at least 6 months for active TB or 3-6 months for latent TB)

To contact the Westmorland and Furness Health Protection Team,

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