



SCREENING TB

Information on tuberculosis



What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by infection from a bacterium called *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis* that can infect anyone.

It is present throughout the world: every year, almost 9 million people contract the disease and, though treatable, every day more than 3,800 people die from it.

Although the disease usually affects the lungs, it can also affect other parts of the body such as bones, kidneys and intestines.

How is it transmitted?

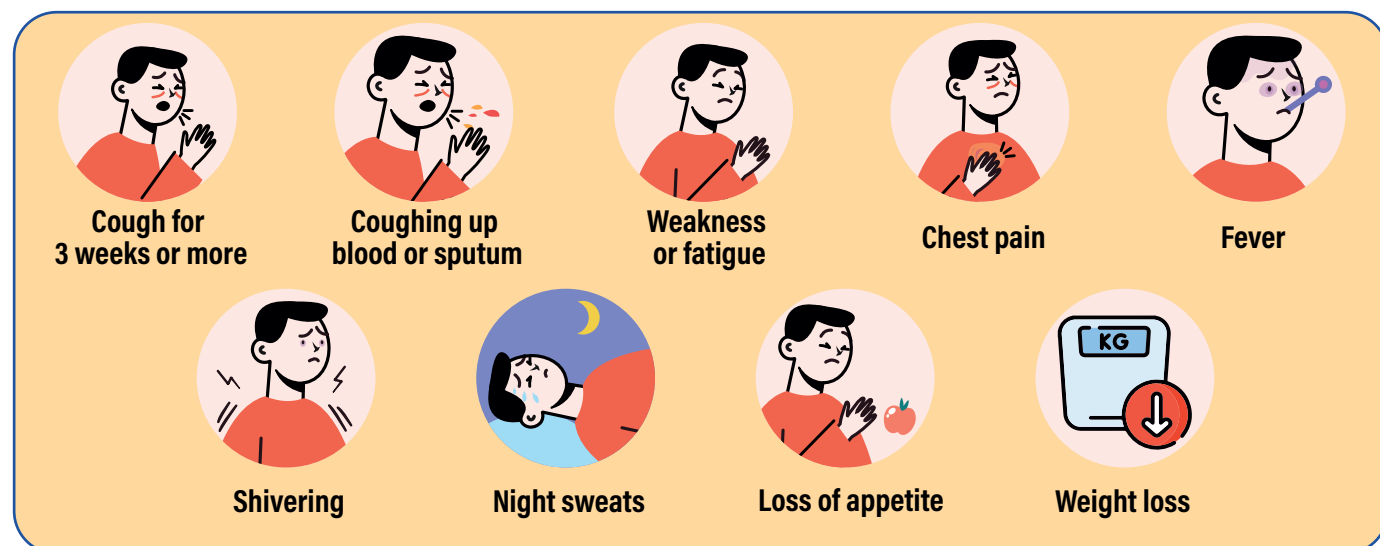
Contagion is easy, especially in closed and crowded environments, and can occur through the sneeze of an infected person, a cough, or droplets of saliva emitted while speaking.

Not all people infected by the tuberculosis bacterium fall ill. There are in fact two forms of tuberculosis: latent infection (without symptoms) and active disease (with symptoms).



If left untreated, the latent infection can become active at any time. If not treated adequately, active tuberculosis can become lethal.

What are the symptoms of tuberculosis active disease?



What are the TB screening test available?



There are screening tests you can do to ascertain whether you are infected even in the absence of any symptoms.

Running the tests and following treatments protects you, your family, your friends and the community as a whole. It is important for your health and allows you to work and participate in social activities in Italy.

There are two types of tests: the Mantoux skin test and the Quantiferon blood test.

What is the Mantoux skin test?



The TB skin test is used to discover whether you are infected with tuberculosis bacteria. A healthcare worker will use a small needle to inject a liquid called tuberculin into the skin of your forearm.

After the test, do not touch your arm. Avoid using bandages, applying creams or scratching the tested area, since that could affect the results. You may wash with water, but do not clean with soap or scrub.

After 2 or 3 days, you will need to go back to the clinic, where a healthcare operator will read your test.

You can have swelling where the liquid was injected. The healthcare worker will measure the swelling and tell you the result of the test.

If you do not show up for your appointment 2 or 3 days after the test, you will have to repeat it.

If the test is positive

You might have tuberculosis bacteria in your body, but it is not sure.

To get certainty, you will have to take a blood test.

If the test is negative

It is likely that you do not have tuberculosis bacteria in your body. You may still need further tests in the future, however, if you were to develop respiratory symptoms or come into contact with a person infected with tuberculosis.



What is the Quantiferon blood test?



The tuberculosis blood test is used to confirm the positive result of the Mantoux test and discover whether you are infected with tuberculosis bacteria. A healthcare worker will take a blood sample from you. After a few days, the report containing the test results will be ready.

The same blood sample may also be tested for the presence of other infectious diseases that will be explained to you by the healthcare workers in your facility.

If the test is positive

It means that you have tuberculosis bacteria in your body. You will have to do other tests to determine whether yours is the inactive or active form.

These tests include a chest x-ray and a visit by the Hospital Infectious Diseases doctors.

The doctors will give you medicines to be taken for a few months. It is important that you always take those medicines, following the therapy from start to finish, after which you will be cured.

If the test is negative

It is likely that you do not have tuberculosis bacteria in your body and are not sick.

Nevertheless, the doctor might still decide to do further tests if you show respiratory symptoms or have come into contact with a person infected with tuberculosis.



What is a chest x-ray?

It is a test to ascertain whether you have any changes in the lungs. It is performed standing and holding your breath for a few seconds, following the instructions of the healthcare operator.

Can tuberculosis be cured?

Yes, there are medications that can prevent the disease from becoming active, as well as other drugs capable of treating and curing even the active disease.

If you have the latent infection (without symptoms), even if you do not feel ill, the tuberculosis bacteria can live in your body for years and make you sick.

If you have the active disease, you must take medicines for a few months. It is important that you take the medicines as instructed by the doctor, until the end of the treatment. This is to help you feel better and prevent other people from getting sick.