# Tuberculosis
Fact Sheet

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services
Paul R. LePage, Governor
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**What is TB?**
Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which usually affects the lungs. However, other parts of the body can also be affected. Not everyone infected with TB gets sick. As a result, there are two TB-related conditions: Latent TB Infection (LTBI) and active TB disease.

**How is TB spread?**
TB disease can cause infection in the lung (pulmonary), which is considered infectious to others. TB disease can also occur outside of the lung (extrapulmonary), which is not infectious. When someone with active TB disease of the lung coughs, sneezes, or sings, TB germs get into the air. People who share the same air space with this person may breathe in these germs.

**Who gets TB?**
Anyone can get TB. People at greater risk are family members, friends, and coworkers who share the same air space with the person who has TB disease of the lungs. Others at increased risk include the elderly, people living in group settings, people who abuse drugs or alcohol, people with medical conditions such as diabetes, HIV infection (the virus that cause AIDS), or certain types of cancer, and people who are underweight.

**What are the symptoms of TB?**
For active TB disease, general symptoms may include: weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats. Persons with TB of the lung may have complaints of cough that lasts three or more weeks, chest pain, and/or coughing up blood. Other symptoms depend on the particular part of the body that is affected.

**What is the difference between TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease?**
People with TB infection (without disease) have TB germs in their body but are not sick because the germs are not active. They cannot spread the germ to others. However, these people may develop TB disease in the future, if the TB germ becomes active.

People with TB disease usually have one or more of the symptoms of TB and are sick because the TB germs are active and multiplying in their body. People with TB disease in their lungs can spread TB germs to others.

**How can I tell if I have TB?**
A tuberculin skin test (TST), or blood test (IGRA), is done to detect latent TB infection. If either of these tests is positive, a chest x-ray and other exams will be done to make sure you do not have active TB disease. Your doctor can perform a TB test.

**What is the treatment of TB?**
Tuberculosis drugs (antibiotics) are required for persons with active TB disease to prevent the spread of disease to others. Preventive treatment is for people with latent TB infection (LTBI) to prevent to active disease from developing in the future. These drugs are usually taken for 3 to 9 months. If TB disease is not treated properly, it can be fatal.

**What can be done to stop the spread of TB?**
It is critical for the patient to take his/her TB drugs as prescribed by their provider and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

**What is multi-drug resistant TB?**
Multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB is caused by the TB germs being resistant to first-line antibiotic drugs. This can develop when TB patients do not take their TB drugs as prescribed by the doctor. When resistance occurs, one or more of the TB drugs can no longer kill the TB germs. Extensively drug resistant (XDR) TB has also been found, and is when the TB germs are resistant to some of the first-line and second-line TB drugs.

**Where can I get more information?**
For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - http://www.cdc.gov/tb – is another excellent source of health information.

Created on: 11/24/2008 Updated 12/8/2016
Source of Information: Maine TB Prevention and Control Program and federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention