



## Tuberculosis

### **Definition:**

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: Inactive Tuberculosis (also known as latent TB Infection or LTBI) and active TB disease.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

Inactive TB (LTBI) does not cause symptoms and is not infectious. Active TB disease can cause infection in the lung (pulmonary), which is considered infectious to others. Active TB disease can also occur outside of the lung (extrapulmonary), which is not infectious. For active TB disease, general symptoms may include weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats. Individuals with pulmonary TB may have complaints of a cough lasting three or more weeks, chest pain, and/or coughing up blood. For extrapulmonary TB, other symptoms depend on the particular part of the body that is affected.

### **Transmission:**

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

### **Diagnosis:**

Tuberculosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms, medical history, and laboratory and radiology tests.

### **Role of the School Nurse:**

#### **Prevention**

- Recommend TB testing to students and staff who may have been exposed to TB, either from a known case, or from travel to/from an endemic country.
- Ensure students and staff who are being treated for active TB or inactive TB (LTBI) take their medication as prescribed.

#### **Treatment Recommendations**

- Symptomatic students and staff should be referred to their primary care providers for treatment.

#### **Exclusions**

- Exclude students and staff with diagnosed active TB *only* during infectious period as determined by the provider.
- Exclusion is not necessary for individuals with inactive TB (LTBI) or non-infectious active TB.

- Individuals who are contacts of infectious active TB disease patients should not be excluded from school unless they are symptomatic and have not been evaluated by a provider.

### **Reporting Requirements**

- Confirmed or presumptive active TB is reportable to Maine CDC immediately upon suspicion through the REDCap reporting form <https://redcap.link/Maine-TB-report>.
- During a school related contact investigation or outbreak, the school nurse will work as liaison between the school and the TB Control program. The school nurse will need to assist with developing a list of close contacts and will help with follow up for those contacts.

### **Resources:**

- Maine CDC Tuberculosis website (including fact sheet) <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/tb>
- Federal CDC Tuberculosis website <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/>