

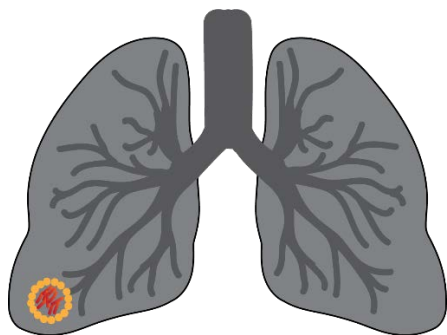
Fight TB: Know the signs and symptoms

Since January of 2016, we have seen an increase of multidrug-resistance tuberculosis (MDR TB) in Minnesota. The severe increase in these rates is due to an MDR TB outbreak within the Hmong community of the east metro. What is very concerning about this outbreak is that it is not regular TB, but MDR TB. This means some of the typical medicines used to treat TB do not work, and we need to use stronger medications over a long period of time to get rid of the disease.

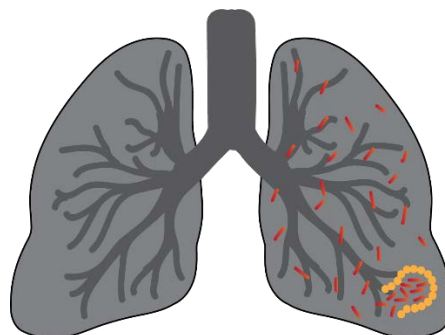
Stopping this outbreak will take a community effort. The first step is understanding what TB is and how to protect yourself and your family.

TB is a disease caused by bacteria that usually attacks the lungs. TB germs have two phases: 1.) Latent TB infection, and 2.) Active TB disease.

Latent TB infection
(TB germs are sleeping/not active)

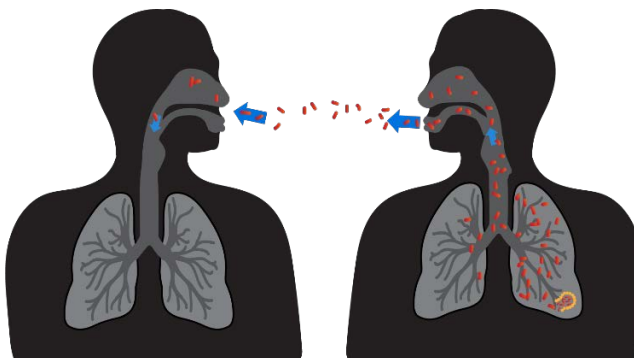


Active TB disease
(TB germs are awake and causing sickness)



When the TB germs are sleeping, they cannot spread to other people and they do not make people feel sick. TB germs can stay sleeping for many years and become active (awake) because other conditions weaken the person's body, such as aging, smoking, taking certain medications (like prednisone), or the presence of another health condition like diabetes or kidney disease.

A person with active TB disease is sick and can spread the germs when they cough, sneeze, sing, or talk. Other people who breathe in this air can get TB germs in their body and develop latent TB infection.



FIGHT TB: KNOW THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The current outbreak has primarily impacted elders in the Hmong community. Many Hmong elders were exposed to TB before coming to the United States. Those who had latent TB infection might remember being treated when they arrived in Minnesota years ago. However, if they were exposed to MDR TB, the treatment they received for latent TB infection might not have worked. As they get older and have other health conditions, the MDR TB germs are waking up and making the person sick. TB can spread if not treated right away, so many elders have now been exposed to MDR TB.

The Minnesota Department of Health and Ramsey County Public Health are trying to get everyone who has been exposed tested and treated appropriately, but we need the help of the Hmong community to fight MDR TB. If your loved one has been contacted by Ramsey County, please assist them in getting to the TB Clinic to get tested.

The symptoms of active TB disease include:

- Coughing for 3 weeks or longer
- Coughing up blood or brown-colored material from your lungs
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in the chest
- Sweating at night
- Fever or chills
- Unintentional weight loss

People who have symptoms of TB, or anyone who may have been exposed to TB, need to see their health care provider and be tested for TB. Getting tested is the first step to fighting TB.

TB can be treated and cured with medications. The treatment can take a long time, but it is the only way to stop the disease and protect the community. People exposed to TB or being treated for TB need support, encouragement, and understanding from family and friends.

Fear of TB can cause some people to feel isolated and afraid. It is important to know that a person with TB does not pose an immediate risk to the public. It typically requires contact with someone who has active TB over a long time for TB to spread to another person. If a person with active TB disease takes their medications as prescribed and their doctor says they are not infectious, they can be in public without worrying about making anyone sick.

To help protect yourself and loved ones from TB, follow these steps:

- Watch for symptoms of TB in yourself and others.
- See your health care provider if you notice symptoms of TB to get tested.
- Follow instructions for taking TB medicine, even if you start to feel better.
- Stay home when you are sick and ask friends and family to stay home when they are sick.

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