



## WHY AND HOW IS A CONTACT INVESTIGATION UNDERTAKEN?

People in the immediate vicinity of a contagious patient are examined to see if they have been infected or if they themselves are ill. The investigation involves **a tuberculin skin test, a chest x-ray or both.**

People in the vicinity of an ill person are also examined so as to discover the source of the infection. Together with the infected person, a nurse will draw up a list of persons he or she has been in frequent contact with during the last months: family members, friends, colleagues, classmates, members of an association or leisure club.



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE?

Talk to your doctor.

Visit [www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be](http://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be) or contact the agency "Zorg en Gezondheid" in your province:

- \ Antwerp: 03 224 62 04
- \ Limburg: 011 74 22 40
- \ East Flanders: 09 276 13 80
- \ Flemish Brabant: 016 66 63 50
- \ West Flanders: 050 24 79 00

Visit [www.vrgt.be](http://www.vrgt.be) or get in touch with the Flemish "Vereniging voor Respiratoire Gezondheidszorg en Tuberculosebestrijding" (Association for Respiratory Health Care and Tuberculosis) (VRGT) in your province:

- \ Antwerp:  
Berchem: 03 287 80 10 - Turnhout: 014 41 13 62
- \ Limburg: 011 22 10 33
- \ East Flanders: 09 225 22 58
- \ Flemish Brabant: 016 33 25 25
- \ West Flanders: 059 70 26 85

Resp. ed.: Dirk Dewolf, Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid - 11/2014

Uit het Nederlands vertaalde folder die ook in het Nederlands te verkrijgen is via bovenstaande contactgegevens.

Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid  
Koning Albert II-laan 35 bus 33  
1030 BRUSSEL  
[www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be](http://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be)



Vlaanderen  
is zorg



# TUBERCULOSIS

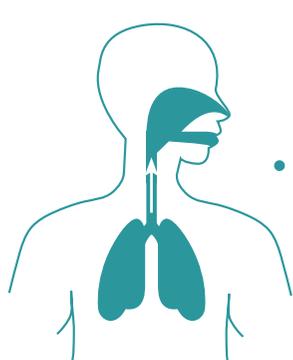
AGENTSCHAP  
ZORG & GEZONDHEID

Tuberculosis is an infectious illness which is caused by the tubercle bacillus or Koch's bacillus. Commonly taking the form of pulmonary tuberculosis, the disease sometimes also affects the kidneys, bones, brain, glands or other organs.

## HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED?

Tuberculosis is virtually almost always spread **through the air**. The tubercle bacilli are expelled into the air when a person suffering from infectious pulmonary tuberculosis coughs, talks or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in the bacteria. If the bacteria penetrate the lungs they may cause a minor infection there that generally heals spontaneously but it may spread further in some individuals.

The bacteria may also travel **through the blood or lymphatic vessels** to reach other organs (kidneys, bones, brain, glands...). Tuberculosis is almost never spread through objects (cutlery, clothes, books, bedclothes...).



## WHO CAN CATCH TUBERCULOSIS?

**Anyone** can catch tuberculosis. However, young children and people with reduced resistance are more susceptible to the disease.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The most common symptoms of active lung tuberculosis are:

- \ a persistent cough, often with phlegm
- \ a loss of appetite
- \ weight loss
- \ chest pain
- \ (high) fever
- \ night sweats
- \ tiredness

The complaints may not all appear at the same time. Some people may not have any of these complaints, and still be suffering from tuberculosis.

## CAN TUBERCULOSIS BE CURED?

Yes, the illness can be completely cured. The treatment generally consists of three or four medicinal products (antibiotics).

These antibiotics have to be taken for at least six months because bacteria are difficult to destroy. Not following the treatment properly may lead to a relapse. There is a chance that the treatment becomes more difficult as bacteria become resistant to ordinary antibiotics.

## WHEN ARE YOU CONTAGIOUS TO OTHER PEOPLE?

You are contagious when tubercle bacilli show up in your phlegm (contagious pulmonary tuberculosis). In case no tubercle bacilli show up, the disease is referred to as non contagious pulmonary tuberculosis. A tuberculosis infection of another organ (outside the lungs) is not contagious.

When you have been following the treatment properly for a few weeks, the cough and the contagiousness decreases, but the disease is not cured yet. Proper cough hygiene also reduces the risk of infecting other people: you should always cough in a paper tissue keeping your hand in front of your mouth and with the face turned away from other people. Throw away the tissue in a waste basket and wash your hands with water and liquid soap.

