**TB in adults: Frequently asked questions**

1. **What is TB and how is it caught?**

Tuberculosis (TB) is a curable infection caused by a germ (Mycobacterium tuberculosis). It can affect any part of the body, but most often the lungs. The TB germ is released into the air when someone with TB of the lungs coughs or sneezes. Breathing in the germ can result in infection. But only some people with TB of the lungs are infectious to other people. Such cases have what is called **‘*open’ TB infection****.* Even then TB is very difficult to catch. You need close and lengthy contact with an infected person to become infected yourself.

However some people are less resistant to infection due to their medical condition or treatment. TB is readily treatable with a course of special antibiotics.

1. **What is latent TB and why is that tested for?**

When a person breathes in TB germs, the germs are most often killed in the body and do not cause any problems.In a small number of people the germs are not killed but survive in the body in an inactive state for many months or years. These people have ***latent TB infection***. They are not ill and are not infectious to others. A TB blood test is required to diagnose this infection.

People with latent TB infection could develop TB disease many years later, especially if they have weak immune systems due to illness or treatment. This is why it is important to test for it and treat it.

1. **Why the screening being is carried out and what does it entail?**

You are being invited for screening because we believe that you have been exposed to a person whilst at work who has since been diagnosed with open TB.

Screening is the best method to identify if a person has active or latent TB infection and needs to be considered for further investigation and treatment.

There are three parts to the screening: medical history via a questionnaire; chest x-ray and a blood test. The blood test will help identify if the individual has TB infection and the x-ray will help identify any changes in the lungs that are consistent with TB. The screening appointment should take no more than one hour.

1. **Can you tell us more about how the individual contracted TB?**

For confidentiality reasons, we cannot discuss individual patients and their details.

**5. What are the symptoms of TB and what should I do if I have any?**

The TB bacteria can remain in the body without causing any symptoms or spread slowly within the body to cause more active symptoms. Symptoms can appear many months or years after exposure.

* Symptoms in adults can include:
* Fever
* Heavy sweating at night
* Cough lasting for more than three weeks
* Blood in your sputum (phlegm or spit)
* Unexplained weight loss

If you have any symptoms suggesting of TB or have any immediate concerns, please contact Occupational Health & Wellbeing on 07541645102 for advice from one of our clinical team