

using skin tests and/or chest x-rays. A thorough job of contact tracing is important to prevent the spread of tuberculosis, and according to the Communicable Diseases Act both the patient and those called in for testing are obligated to co-operate.

Can tuberculosis be prevented with a vaccine? (kan man vaccinera sig mot tuberkulos?)

Tuberculosis vaccine (BCG) protects against the most serious types of tuberculosis such as meningitis, but is less effective for pulmonary tuberculosis. Young children are particularly sensitive and in Sweden children at increased risk of infection are vaccinated, such as those who come into contact with relatives from countries where tuberculosis is common, or who visit such countries. Individuals vaccinated with BCG may still become infected or ill with tuberculosis.

Where can you get tested for tuberculosis? (var kan man undersöka sig för tuberkulos?)

Primary care medical centres or departments of pulmonary disease or infectious disease at the hospital can test for tuberculosis. It is important to tell medical personnel about previous tuberculosis infection if you become ill and seek treatment. Medications can cure tuberculosis.

For more information about tuberculosis:

1177 Vårdguiden:

www.1177.se

The Public Health Agency of Sweden:

www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se

World Health Organization (WHO):

www.who.int/topics/tuberculosis/en

You may ask questions about tuberculosis infection by telephone at Department of Communicable Disease Control: +46 (0)60-13 52 41 or by e-mail: smittskyddsenheten@lvn.se

This folder is originally produced by Department of Communicable Disease Control, Stockholm County Council. It is adapted to Västernorrland County Council and published with permission.

ENGELSKA

Tuberculosis

FACTS ABOUT
Infection and Transmission,
Symptoms, Diagnosis
and Treatment

What is tuberculosis? (vad är tuberkulos?)

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It usually causes pneumonia, but other parts of the body may be afflicted, such as lymph glands, skeletal system, brain and kidneys.

Tuberculosis is common in many parts of the world and 2 million people die from the disease each year. In Sweden about 600-700 people are afflicted annually.

How is tuberculosis spread? (hur smittar tuberkulos?)

Tuberculosis spreads from adults suffering from pulmonary (lung) tuberculosis. The bacteria are spread through the air when people cough or sneeze.

Tuberculosis cannot spread through food, cutlery, clothing or other objects. Infection most commonly occurs from one household member to the next or from parent to child.

What is the difference between being infected with tuberculosis and being ill with tuberculosis? Individuals who become ill with tuberculosis have a large number of active bacteria in the body. They usually have disease symptoms and if the tuberculosis affects the lungs the person may be contagious to others. Tuberculosis can be treated with medications. If tuberculosis is not treated the disease may lead to permanent injury and death.

An infected individual who does not become ill has what is called latent (dormant) tuberculosis. These people have far fewer bacteria and they are inactive. Therefore this person is not ill and cannot infect others. At some point later in life the bacteria may be activated and the person then becomes ill. Consequent-

ly, infected individuals may also be treated with medicine to prevent later illness, known as preventive treatment.

Who gets tuberculosis? (vem får tuberkulos?)

Anyone can become infected with tuberculosis. The risk of later becoming ill is greatest in small children and people with impaired immunity, such as those with HIV, people who take medications that inhibit the immune system, and drug and alcohol abusers. A long period may separate the time of infection from the time when the disease occurs. Among all those who are infected, about 10 per cent become ill.

What are the symptoms? (vilka är symptomen?)

Common symptoms in pulmonary tuberculosis in adults are cough and chest pain that do not resolve after several weeks, even with antibiotic treatment. Fever, decreased appetite, weight loss, night sweats and pronounced fatigue are other typical symptoms.

If tuberculosis afflicts organs other than the lungs symptoms from these organs may occur, such as swollen glands, back pain, or headache.

In children tuberculosis often manifests only with fever and sometimes with asthma-like symptoms and swollen glands.

How do you know if you have tuberculosis? (hur vet man om man fått tuberkulos?)

In cases of suspected infection with tuberculosis an immune test and chest x-ray are done. The immune test can take the form of a skin test (tuberculin test – PPD) or a blood test (IGRA

– Quantiferon). If these tests confirm the suspicion of tuberculosis, a sputum sample or samples from other symptomatic areas are taken to culture the bacteria.

How do the immune tests work? (hur fungerar immuntesterna?)

The tuberculin test is a skin test in which protein from tuberculosis bacteria is injected into the skin. In cases of infection a reaction with swelling in the skin usually occurs. The tuberculin test may be positive even if infection with tuberculosis is not present.

The IGRA test (Quantiferon) investigates in a blood test whether the blood reacts to substances from tuberculosis bacteria. However, it takes up to two months from the date of infection before a positive test can be achieved.

What happens in cases of tuberculosis infection? (vad händer om man fått tuberkulos?)

Persons who become ill with tuberculosis are treated with drugs for tuberculosis. The treatment cures the infection and the patient recovers. At least six months of treatment is required.

According to the Communicable Diseases Act the patient is required to comply with the doctor's prescriptions for medications and to return for follow-up visits.

What does contact tracing mean? (vad innebär smittspårning?)

When a person becomes ill with tuberculosis all contacts must be traced to find others who may also have become infected or who may be contagious. Contact tracing is accomplished