

## What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by the TB bacteria (germ). TB usually affects the lungs but it can affect any part of the body.

TB of the lungs or throat is infectious. This means people with this type of TB may be able to spread the bacteria to others.

## How is TB spread?

TB is spread through the air from person to person when someone with active TB disease in the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, sings, laughs or speaks.

The TB bacteria can stay in the air for hours. People nearby that breathe the air containing the bacteria may become infected. TB cannot be spread by touching surfaces, shaking hands, or sharing objects.

There is a difference between being infected with TB and having active TB disease. People that are infected have the bacteria in their body but their immune system is able to protect them from getting sick. They cannot spread the bacteria to others.

Active TB disease occurs when the immune system cannot keep the bacteria under control. The bacteria multiply and grow causing the person to become sick.

Only 10 percent of people infected with TB will develop active TB disease. Those that do must take medication to treat the disease.

## What is home isolation?

Home isolation is when people with TB disease are required to stay home and limit their activities outside the home in order to prevent spreading TB to others.

## How long must I be on isolation?

You will need to stay on home isolation until the TB doctor tells you that you are no longer at risk of spreading TB to others.

The length of isolation depends on the type of TB you have and how well you respond to treatment. It may be as short as two weeks or it may be longer. Taking every dose of your medication will help shorten the time spent on isolation.

You may be asked to give more sputum samples, have a chest x-ray or other tests before stopping isolation. Your TB doctor or nurse will tell you when home isolation is no longer needed.

**For more information, contact  
TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan at**  
1-866-780-6482 or  
Saskatoon Main Office (306) 655-1740  
Prince Albert Office (306) 765-4260  
Regina Office (306) 766-4311



## Instructions

1. Stay at home unless you need urgent medical care or have an urgent medical appointment. Contact TB Prevention and Control if your housing situation changes (example: you move or others move in with you).
2. Restrict visitors to the home. In some cases the people you live with may not be able to stay in the same house. This may be the case if babies, young children and people with weak immune systems live with you. Your TB doctor or nurse will talk with you about this.
3. Do not go to work, school or other public places such as restaurants, movie theatres, banks, bingo, fitness or community centres, grocery stores or shopping malls.
4. Do not use any form of public transportation (example: bus, train, or airplane).
5. Wear a mask when outside your home: to attend medical appointments, when you are in a car with others and at the medical clinic. Provided you wear a mask, travel by taxi is allowed in order to attend urgent medical appointments. Taxi windows should remain open during travel when possible.
6. If you have to travel by ambulance or go to the hospital or health centre for emergency services, tell the people looking after you that you have active TB disease.
7. You may go outdoors without a mask provided you are not in close contact with others for an extended period of time.
8. If the weather allows, open the windows in your house to help move the TB bacteria outside.
9. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR).

## Additional instructions

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**Tell your TB doctor or nurse if you are unable to follow these instructions or your symptoms get worse**

## Legal Authority

The provincial Public Health Act (1994) requires persons with active TB disease to comply with treatment and counseling in order to prevent spreading TB to others. If you are unable to follow the home isolation instructions, and continue to put others at risk of being infected with TB, the Medical Health Officer in your health region may issue an order requiring you to be isolated in a health-care facility and receive treatment. While these types of orders are **rare** they highlight the importance of taking your medication and following the home isolation instructions.

