

IPC Bulletin for GP Practices

North Yorkshire

Issue No. 15– March 2019

The North Yorkshire TB Nursing Service is part of the Infection Prevention and Control Service and provides support and advice across North Yorkshire

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.



TB often affects the lungs, but can affect other parts of the body, such as the lymph nodes, bones and the brain. However, it is only infectious when in the lungs or throat.

TB is usually spread through the air when a person with TB of their lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, laughs or sings.

Patients with 'sputum smear positive' (or 'open' TB of the lungs) are more likely to be infectious, but even then, close and prolonged contact is needed for TB to be transmitted to another person, e.g. living with someone who has open TB.

TB is a notifiable disease under Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

<https://phil.cdc.gov/Details.aspx?pid=18138>

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get TB, but it is difficult to acquire. People are most at risk if they live in the same household or spend a lot of time in the same room as someone with infectious TB.

The following people have a higher risk of being infected:

- Those in very close contact with an infectious case
- Those born or having lived in a country with a high incidence of TB
- Those whose immune systems are weak, e.g. immunosuppressed due to chemotherapy treatment, steroids, or with HIV infection
- Those with a social risk factor for TB, e.g. homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system, drug or alcohol misuse

Infection with the TB bacteria may not always develop into active TB.

Latent TB

Latent TB Infection is when somebody has been infected with TB, but it has not become active. They are asymptomatic and not infectious. Sometimes they are unaware of the TB Index case.

People with latent TB have a 10% lifetime risk of developing active TB disease. So, if it is diagnosed, they are offered a 3-6 month course of chemoprophylaxis to reduce this risk.

| Active TB | Latent TB |
|---|--|
| Cough, haemoptysis, pyrexia, lethargy, night sweats, anorexia | No symptoms |
| Requires treatment with at least 6 months antibiotics | 3 or 6 months chemoprophylaxis to reduce a 10% risk of developing to active TB |
| Infectious – depending on site of disease | Never infectious |
| Close contacts are screened | Contacts do not need to be screened |
| Notifiable disease - by Hospital Consultant | Not notifiable |

New Entrant TB Screening

The North Yorkshire TB Nursing Service are informed by Capita of all new GP registrants from high incidence countries and contacts the patient in writing to invite them for screening. The TB Nursing Service runs regular clinics at both York and Harrogate Hospitals and ad hoc clinics at Scarborough and Friarage Hospitals. Occasionally, they may request a clinic at your surgery if there are a large number of patients requiring screening registered at your practice.

If a clinic is held in your surgery, no specific infection control precautions required. However, the TB Nurses will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

Do you suspect TB?

Request three consecutive sputum samples, chest x-ray and refer **urgently** to the Respiratory Consultant in your locality.

York: 01904 726045

| Scarborough: 01723 342037

Harrogate: 01423 553394

| Friarage: 01609 762035

For any TB queries, please contact:
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END TB World TB Day
 24 March, 2019
www.stoptb.org