



TUBERCULOSIS (TB) UPDATE – Glanmire Community College, 22nd February 2018

22/02/2018

Dear Parent,

A person attending Glanmire Community College was notified to the Department of Public Health, HSE South as a case of Tuberculosis (TB) recently. The case is under the care of a hospital Consultant and is on antibiotic treatment for TB. It is imperative that confidentiality and the patient's privacy are respected.

Staff from the Department of Public Health are liaising with Glanmire Community College to identify close contacts that will be offered screening (cf Q5 below). This process is undertaken as per national and international guidelines. Those persons identified as closest contacts will be offered screening and we will continue to review results of screening and carry out ongoing risk assessment.

If your child is identified as a close contact, he/she will be offered an appointment to attend a clinic where we will complete a screening questionnaire and offer a skin test (mantoux 2TU). The skin test will be read 48 – 72 hours later by us.

If your child is not identified as a close contact, he/she will not be offered contact tracing at this time. The results of screening will be monitored by Public Health and you will be kept informed. Screening of family and other close contacts is carried out first and this is underway.

The following Q & A will provide you with information on TB.

1. What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It can affect any part of the body but usually affects the lungs. TB is treated with a combination of antibiotics over many months.

What is most important is that TB is diagnosed early, that treatment begins quickly and the person takes their medication until the course is completed.

TB is curable if the patient takes the appropriate medication for the appropriate time as prescribed by the treating physician.

2. What are the symptoms of TB?

Symptoms of TB can include any of the following:

- Fever
- Night sweats
- Cough (generally lasting more than 3 weeks)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blood in the sputum (phlegm)
- Unusual tiredness

A person with any of these symptoms should contact their doctor.

3. How is TB spread?

TB is usually spread from someone who has untreated **TB of the lungs**. A person with TB of the lungs can be infectious (contagious).



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In a person with lung TB the TB germs can be in the sputum. The germs can be coughed into the air. If a close contact of the case breathes in those germs they may become infected.

However, contact with the TB case usually has to be close (conversational distance) and prolonged (many hours) before someone is at risk of becoming infected.

TB is not spread by cups, cutlery, towels, clothing etc.

4. Who may be at risk of getting TB?

People who have close and prolonged contact with an infectious TB case are at most risk of getting TB. Generally close contacts would be family members, household members or close friends.

Occasionally, work colleagues may work closely enough, and for long enough, with the case to be regarded as close contacts.

The Department of Public Health's medical and nursing staff identifies close contacts of the TB case. Screening tests for TB are then offered.

5. What are the screening tests?

Following national and international guidelines, the screening tests usually include two or more of the following as necessary:

- A questionnaire asking about possible TB symptoms
- A skin test (called a Mantoux test)
- A blood test (called an IGRA test)
- A chest-x-ray

6. What is Latent TB?

It is very important to understand that latent TB is not the same as a TB case.

Latent TB means TB is 'dormant' (not active) in the body. The person has no symptoms. The person feels perfectly well. The person cannot spread TB to others.

They can work and attend college. However, the person may be at risk of becoming a TB case sometime in the future.

A person with latent TB is therefore offered either a course of preventive antibiotics (over several months) or is followed up with regular chest-x-rays.

7. Is there a charge for TB screening tests or treatment?

No. There should be no charge.

8. If I am advised to take anti-TB medication, will it have side-effects?

Anyone who is recommended treatment for either TB or latent TB will

- have the treatment explained to them
- will be followed up regularly by the treating doctor
- will be advised about possible side effects & to report them if they occur
- will have the treatment stopped or changed if necessary

9. If I am diagnosed with TB, or latent TB, can I work / attend college?



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TB: A person taking treatment for TB is generally allowed to return to work / college a number of weeks after starting treatment, on the advice of their physician, without posing any risk to others.

Latent TB: A person with latent TB cannot spread TB to others (cf Q6 above). They do not have to stop working / or attending college at any stage while taking their treatment.

10. If I have any query or concern about TB, what should I do?

If you have any query or concern about TB, please contact the Department of Public Health at the number below (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).

Department of Public Health,
St. Finbarrs Hospital,
Douglas,
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Tel: 021 4923278

Yours sincerely,

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