

Your cough could be a killer

If you have a cough that does not go away it could be serious. It could be tuberculosis, or TB for short. TB is a big problem in South Africa. The good news is that TB can be cured with the help of modern medicine.

When you have this bad cough, think about what else is wrong with you.

Are you tired and feel weak?

Are you losing weight and you don't want to eat?

Do you have chest pains?

Do you cough up blood?

Do you sweat at night?

If the answer is YES, go to your clinic immediately. If the health workers say you have TB, then you need treatment. Without it you could die.

How the TB germ attacks:

- The germ goes into the lung and makes holes in it, like an insect eating a leaf
- The TB germ can affect any part of the body, but it prefers the lungs
- This is called pulmonary TB or PTB
- It is an infectious disease, meaning it spreads from person to person
- That is why it is a "notifiable" disease. The municipality needs to know who has TB so they can stop other people getting it.

The TB germ could attack:

- When one has had a cold or flu
- Or if a person does not eat enough good food
- Or drinks too much alcohol
- Or has a disease called diabetes *mellitus*
- Or if one is very tired, overworked or very old
- Or if one is HIV positive or has full-blown Aids

All these conditions make it hard for the body to fight the TB germ

Stop the spread of TB

- Have babies vaccinated with BCG to protect them against TB. This is available free of charge at all clinics
- Make sure your family has regular and balanced meals
- Take exercise in the fresh air and sunlight
- Drink only pasteurised milk
- Anyone showing TB symptoms must be taken to a TB clinic for an examination
- Patients must attend the clinic regularly for treatment

Important: TB patients must take their medication for as long as the doctor prescribes. **UM**