

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB Background Information

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection caused by a bacterium. TB bacteria are released into the air when someone with infectious TB coughs or sneezes.

TB in the lungs or throat is the only form of the illness that is infectious, but TB can affect any part of the body. Sometimes TB can lie dormant in the body, so someone can be infected with the bacterium but haven't become infectious yet. This is called Latent TB.

However, the risk of catching TB is quite small; usually close contact over a long period is needed, such as someone living in the same house or a close friend of a person with infectious TB.

TB can affect anybody however some groups of people are more at risk of TB infection, including people who have spent time in, or been born in, countries outside the UK where TB is common. People who are more vulnerable to infections like the homeless, people with substance misuse issues or people who already have a lowered immune system like those who are living with HIV.

Local Information

Coventry is a high incidence area for TB (i.e. an area in which TB is common), and although there is generally lower incidence in Warwickshire, there still remains areas of particular TB focus in Warwickshire. Knowing this, there is a great deal of work being undertaken across Coventry and Warwickshire focusing on taking proactive steps to look at the issues. These include:

- Developing clear patient pathways, so people are diagnosed and offered treatment quickly, and supported to stay on treatment and complete it.
- Raising awareness/training key professionals (e.g. in primary care, drug and alcohol services, with plans being made to provide training for homelessness services and the police) across Coventry and Warwickshire
- Within Coventry, working with Community Organisations to raise awareness of TB in high risk population groups.
- Working to establish and develop an effective Latent TB programme which will support early testing to identify anyone in targeted high risk groups who may be infected with TB but not yet infectious, and then offer treatment, working across the Coventry and Rugby CCG footprint.

Please see the latest TB incidence data for Coventry at:

<http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/tuberculosis#page/4/gid/1/pat/42/par/R2/ati/102/are/E08000026/iid/91361/age/1/sex/4>

The incidence of TB has risen and fallen in Coventry but generally remained stable.

Please see the latest TB incidence data for Warwickshire at;

<http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/tuberculosis#page/4/gid/1/pat/42/par/R2/ati/102/are/E10000031/iid/91361/age/1/sex/4>

The incidence of TB has generally remained below the national average.

Key Messages

The most common TB symptoms are:

- A cough for three weeks or longer
- Extreme tiredness
- Fevers
- Night Sweats
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss

The symptoms of TB can emerge slowly and you may not have all of them. If you are concerned you may have TB then the best advice is to see your GP especially if you are from a high risk group or country.



Additional public and professional TB resources can be found at:

<http://www.tbalert.org/>