

Newsletter

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workforce
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Helping you help your employees

TB, Women's Health and Hearing Conservation

“ We cannot win the battle against AIDS if we do not also fight TB ”

NELSON MANDELA

Tuberculosis (TB)

This is a massive burden on our country today as everyone is exposed to TB. The body's natural resistance prevents the disease from developing but should one's defence be compromised, such as in old age or an immune disease, then TB can spread.

The role of the workplace clinic is to educate employees on how to prevent this disease as well as provide screening for the disease. It is a complex disease that is difficult to diagnose. The first step is to take a detailed history and then perform an good examination. Symptoms of TB are:

- Long standing cough that progressively gets worse;
- Weight loss;
- Night sweats;
- Persistent tiredness;
- Loss of appetite;

Once the history suggests TB may be present,

then a screening test must be performed:

- Chest X Ray.
- Sputum analysis (This is also difficult to diagnose) The best test is the GeneXpert which is expensive (over R 1000) but it is diagnostic and rapid. The regular culture will take 6 weeks to get a result.

TB can be treated and cured!

Hearing conservation

Workplace healthcare is based on risk exposure. If a person works in a noisy area, they are at risk of hearing loss. If one does not use personal protective equipment like ear plugs there will be slow hearing loss over time. Deafness is a terrible condition, as one is cut off from communicating with the people around them. Hearing loss in the workplace is preventable!

Please protect your ears!



TUBERCULOSIS

What you need to know

Tuberculosis, more commonly known as TB, is recognised as one of the greatest health threats in the world today. South Africa is recognised as being affected by one of the worst TB epidemics in the world. Statistics have found this disease to be the leading cause of infectious disease deaths amongst youths and children in South Africa today. Studies have also found that more than half of the diagnosed cases of TB are also diagnosed with HIV.

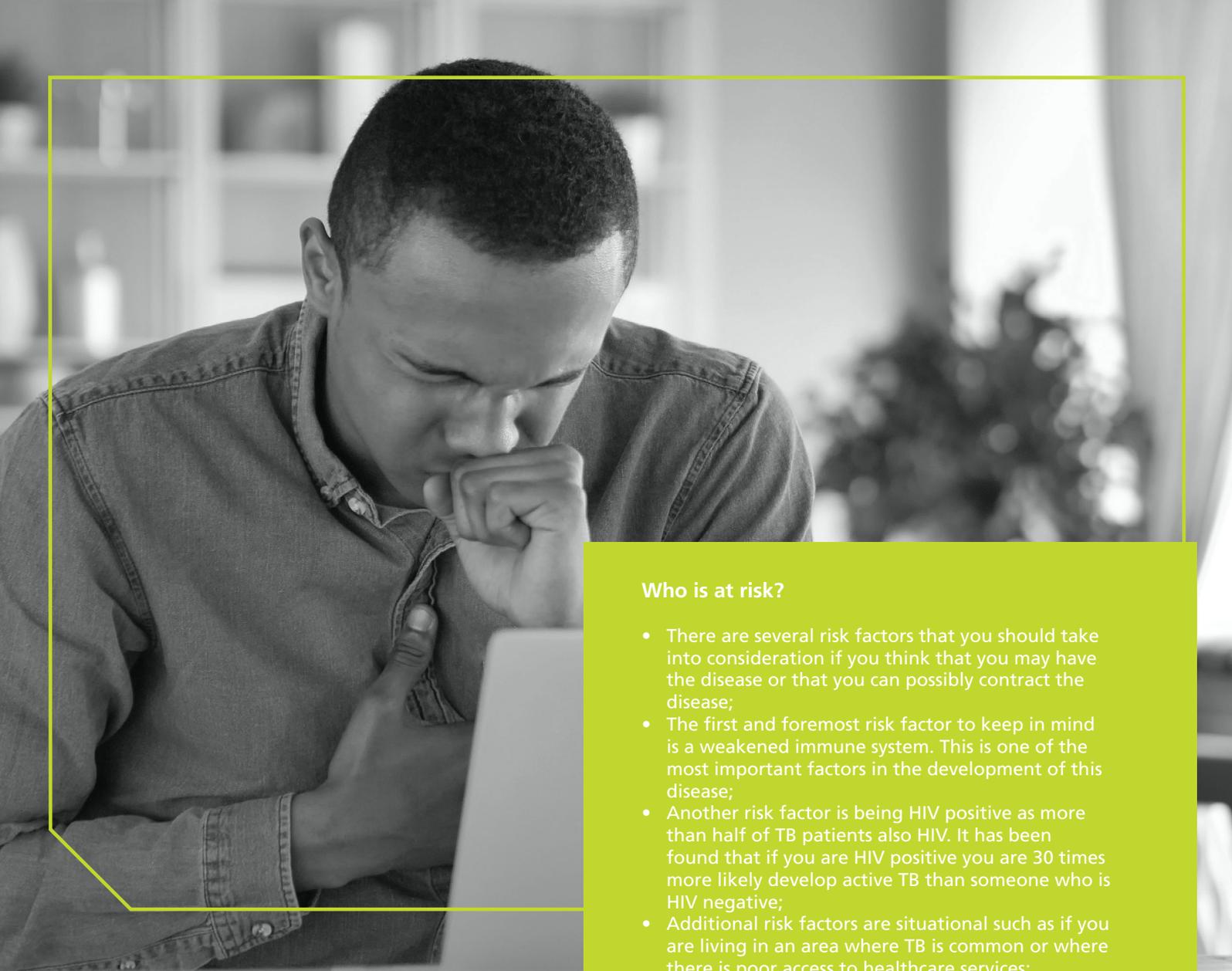
What is it and what causes it?

TB is caused by a bacterium known as Mycobacterium tuberculosis. This bacterium causes an infection that usually affects the lungs, however, it has been known to affect other areas such as the brain and spine. This disease is an infectious disease and TB of the throat and lungs can spread to other people.

Types of TB

Latent TB

This is where the TB bacteria is present within the body, however it is in an inactive state and is therefore not contagious, also there are no symptoms but it can become active later on.



Active TB

This is where the TB bacteria is in an active state, this means that the symptoms are present and the individual is contagious.

How is TB spread?

TB is an airborne bacterium that is released when an infected individual coughs, sneezes, laughs, spits or talks. It is transmitted through small droplets of bacteria that are released and sprayed into the air. This is then transmitted to other people when they breathe in the air. The TB bacteria can stay airborne for a considerable amount of time. However, even though TB is a communicable disease, transmission of the disease is only likely to occur after spending a great amount of time with an individual with active TB. The disease is most likely to be transmitted to those people who the infected person spends a lot of time with in their everyday schedule such as co-workers, friends and family.

It is important to understand that this disease cannot be transmitted from one person to another through any of the following methods:

- Shaking the hand of someone with TB;
- Sharing eating utensils with someone with TB;
- Sharing clothes with someone with TB;
- Toilet seats or bathrooms.

Who is at risk?

- There are several risk factors that you should take into consideration if you think that you may have the disease or that you can possibly contract the disease;
- The first and foremost risk factor to keep in mind is a weakened immune system. This is one of the most important factors in the development of this disease;
- Another risk factor is being HIV positive as more than half of TB patients also HIV. It has been found that if you are HIV positive you are 30 times more likely develop active TB than someone who is HIV negative;
- Additional risk factors are situational such as if you are living in an area where TB is common or where there is poor access to healthcare services;
- If you have a condition such as cancer, diabetes or kidney disease that has weakened your immune system;
- You may also be at risk if you are part of a vulnerable population such as babies, young children and the elderly.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of active TB include the following:

- A cough that lasts for more than two to three weeks;
- If you are coughing up blood;
- If you are experiencing a pain in your chest;
- If you experience sudden weight loss;
- If are experiencing weakness and fatigue;
- If you are experiencing chills, fever and night sweats;
- Lack of appetite.

The type of antibiotic treatment depends on certain aspects such as the individual's age and whether the TB bacteria is latent or active. Individuals diagnosed with latent TB need only take one type of antibiotic, while individuals diagnosed with active TB needs to take a prescription of multiple drugs.

The antibiotics need to be taken for about 6 months and it is important to complete the course. Otherwise, the bacteria that survives will become resistant to medication and could lead to the development of MDR-TB in the future.

WOMEN'S HEALTH AT THE WORKPLACE

“To achieve beauty a woman must first achieve health”

ELIZABETH ARDEN

Historically, women's health has been neglected in the workplace due to the fact that the legislation that had been written was mostly ignored in the past as it was directed at heavy industries and women were often not covered by this legislation. One of the most important challenges facing women in the workplace is the that women are often voiceless in male dominated industries. It is therefore essential that women have a direct voice in what affects them in the workplace.

However, nowadays companies have realised the importance of researching and investing in woman's health. The value of keeping women healthy in the workplace transfers into profit which women bring to companies that have invested in women's health. This is a huge incentive for companies to continue with this approach – when women thrive, businesses thrive as well.

Women's health issues include mental, physical, environmental health, reproductive health, sexual harassment, the double shift and occupational stress.

HEARING CONSERVATION

“It's a noisy world, protect your ears”

UNKNOWN

Noise is unwanted sound and is the by-product of many industry processes. Sound consists of pressure changes in the air caused by vibration or turbulence. These pressure changes produce waves emanating away from the turbulent/vibrating source which causes levels of sound. High levels of noise exposure cause hearing loss which is harmful to a person's health. The intensity of the noise and the duration of the exposure will depend on the damage caused to a person's hearing.

Noise-induced hearing loss can be temporary or permanent. Temporary hearing loss is caused by short exposure to noise with normal hearing returning after a short period of time. Permanent hearing loss accrues over a prolonged period of time with exposure to high levels of noise that gradually cause permanent hearing damage.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970 (now Act 95 of 1993) introduced the requirement that that all persons exposed to noise levels from 80 - 130 decibels (dB) must wear protective hearing gear, like ear plugs or head phones, and be monitored yearly for hearing loss.





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TB

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Women's health in the workplace

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Hearing

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