

**Keep this information sheet.  
Show it to the doctor or the nurse.**

**Tiedote tuberkuloosista: englanti**

## **Information sheet on tuberculosis and the examination of tuberculosis**

### **Why did you get this information sheet?**

In Finland, tuberculosis is a rare disease. Thanks to good treatment it has disappeared nearly completely. You come from a country, in which many people suffer from tuberculosis. You can bear and spread tuberculosis in your close environment without knowing it. For reasons of your own health and that of your relatives and other people around you it is important that an eventual disease of tuberculosis is detected and treated in time.

In Finland, we want to take care of immigrants' health. As you intend to stay in Finland for more than three months, you have the right to have a **chest X-ray** for free. This chest X-ray examination is voluntary. The aim of the chest X-ray examination is to detect whether you have any changes in your lungs due to tuberculosis.

### **Chest X-ray**

Pulmonary tuberculosis is generally detected through chest radiography. Radiography is safe. A woman who is pregnant should inform about her pregnancy before radiography. The chest X-ray of an asymptomatic pregnant woman is made during the last months of pregnancy.

The chest X-ray is made in the health care centre of your district of residence. It is free of charge. If there is something abnormal in the radiograph, you will be contacted and necessary further examinations will be arranged.

### **What are the symptoms of tuberculosis?**

The most important symptom of the pulmonary tuberculosis is a long-term cough that has lasted for over three weeks. It can later become slimy. Coughing may include yellowish, brownish or blood-tinged sputa. With the progress of sickness, difficulty in breathing and chest pain may occur.

The person suffering from tuberculosis may have fever, lose weight and sweat a lot at night. His/her appetite may decrease, and the general state may weaken. There may be other symptoms depending on which part of the body is sick.

In children, tuberculosis may cause delay in growth and development.

### **What to do if you have symptoms corresponding to tuberculosis now or if they appear later?**

Take immediately contact with the health care centre of your district of residence. An examination by a doctor is necessary. The medical examination is free of charge to you. The information on the examination is not given to the Immigration Service.

### **What is tuberculosis?**

Tuberculosis is not anybody's fault. Tuberculosis is a transmissible disease caused by the bacterium named *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Most often tuberculosis appears in the lungs, in which it forms an inflammatory site. The bacteria can spread from that site through blood or lymph elsewhere in the body, for instance into lymph glands, intestines, skin or central nervous system. Tuberculosis may appear at the same time in the lungs and elsewhere in the body.

## **How is tuberculosis transmitted?**

Tuberculosis is transmitted through the air from person to person. The tuberculosis bacteria spread in the air when the person suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis speaks, sings, coughs or sneezes. Then another person in the same room can get tuberculosis bacteria into his/her lungs from the breathing air. Thus the persons who have been a long time with a sick person can become infected. Family members living together have the biggest risk to become infected.

## **Who becomes sick with tuberculosis?**

Only one of ten persons infected by tuberculosis becomes sick. Small under 5-year-old children, young adults, elderly people and people whose capacity of resistance is weakened are those who become easiest sick.

## **How quickly does tuberculosis infection turn into sickness?**

A small under 5-year-old unvaccinated child can become sick in a couple of weeks or months after being infected, and the disease may progress quickly. An adult person, who does not have any underlying conditions, usually becomes sick within 1–2 years after having been infected. It is possible to become sick with tuberculosis even decades after infection. Thus keep in your memory the symptoms of tuberculosis.

## **Where and how is tuberculosis examined?**

The examination of tuberculosis is started in a health care centre, a student's health service or a vocational health care service. Further examinations are carried out at hospital. Children are examined in a hospital ward or at a polyclinic of children's diseases. Adult pulmonary tuberculosis is examined and treated in a hospital ward or at a polyclinic of pulmonary diseases.

If pulmonary tuberculosis is suspected, a chest X-ray is taken and sputum samples are examined. A tuberculosis colour test and culture are made with a sputum sample. If necessary, a quick test indicating the tuberculosis gene can be carried out.

Sometimes it is necessary to view the bronchi or to make a tomography scan of the lungs. When tuberculosis is examined elsewhere than in the lungs, various methods of imaging are used. Moreover, the objective is to get a sample of tissue or pus of the sick organ.

## **How is tuberculosis treated?**

Tuberculosis is treated with medicines. At the beginning there are at least four medicines. The treatment of the ordinary tuberculosis takes at least six months. Tuberculosis can be healed very well providing it is diagnosed early enough and the treatment is carried out during the required period of time. The treatment of tuberculosis is good and free of charge in Finland.

For further information: [www.tuberkuloosi.fi](http://www.tuberkuloosi.fi)