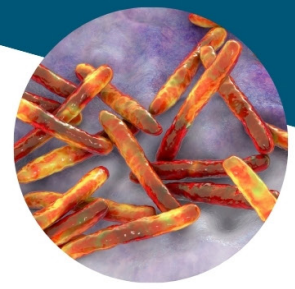


COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TUBERCULOSIS



MYTH: *“TB is a disease of the past”*

FACT: Many people believe that TB is no longer a significant health threat, assuming it was eradicated or is only found in history books. In reality, **TB is still a major global health issue, with millions of new cases each year.** About a quarter of the global population is estimated to have been infected with TB bacteria. About 5-10% of people infected with TB will eventually get symptoms and develop TB disease.

MYTH: *“You can catch TB just by being near someone with it”*

FACT: TB is not easily spread. **It is primarily transmitted through the air when someone with active pulmonary TB coughs or sneezes.** Casual contact, such as sitting next to someone on public transport, does not typically spread the disease.

MYTH: *“TB only affects people with weakened immune systems”*

FACT: While people with compromised immune systems are at higher risk, **TB can affect anyone, even those with healthy immune systems,** especially if they are exposed to the bacteria over a prolonged period. In my communities it has a devastating impact on the pediatric populations especially those under the age of five. This is because immune systems are not developed and because of this the probability of infection and progression to disease is much higher often resulting in life threatening forms of TB.

MYTH: *“Latent TB means you’re contagious”*

FACT: **People with latent TB infection (LTBI) are not contagious. The bacteria are present in the body but are inactive and cannot be spread to others.** It’s only when TB becomes active that a person becomes contagious.

MYTH: *“If you’re treated for TB, you’re cured right away”*

FACT: **TB treatment takes time, typically six to nine months.** Even if symptoms improve, it’s crucial to complete the entire course of treatment to ensure the infection is fully eradicated and to prevent drug resistance.

MYTH: *“TB only affects the lungs”*

FACT: **While pulmonary TB (affecting the lungs) is the most common form, TB can affect other parts of the body, including the kidneys, spine, brain, and lymph nodes,** leading to extrapulmonary TB. In my practice I have seen several types of TB in almost every body system.

MYTH: *“Only people with symptoms need to get tested for TB”*

FACT: **Many people with latent TB infection do not show symptoms.** Because latent TB can progress to active TB later, it’s important for at-risk individuals to be tested, even if they feel healthy.

These misconceptions can contribute to stigma, delay in diagnosis, and ineffective TB prevention and control efforts. Public education and awareness are key to addressing these misunderstandings.

Tuberculosis is preventable and curable.