



Medical Annex ♦ 4813 New Haven Avenue ♦ Fort Wayne, IN 46803

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## Frequently Asked Questions about Tuberculosis

### What is TB?

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that is caused by bacteria. Although TB infection can occur anywhere in the body, it usually is found in the lungs.

### Is it serious?

Yes. If not treated properly, TB disease can be life-threatening.

### How is TB spread?

The TB bacteria is spread the same way that cold and flu viruses are spread: through the air. Whenever someone with active TB in their throat or lungs sneezes, coughs, or spits, the bacteria is released into the air. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

### How contagious is it? Can you get TB simply from being in the same room with someone who has it?

TB is not spread by shaking someone's hand, kissing or sharing food or drink. It usually requires close contact over a long period of time. The likelihood of transmission occurring in an average-size room is very low.

### Where did the exposure occur?

The exposure only occurred at Cali Nails located in Southgate Plaza. The address is 208 E Pettit Ave.

### How was I exposed to TB at the nail salon?

Someone with active, infectious TB was present at the location at the same time as you. If present at the same time, you may have breathed in some of the TB bacteria, however; the risk is very low.

### You said someone was present at the salon at the same time as me. Was this an employee or a client?

We cannot discuss anything about the patient. We feel the risk is very low, but wanted to offer testing to anyone that may have been exposed.

### What is the difference between latent TB infection and active TB disease?

People with latent TB infection have the TB bacteria in their bodies, but they are not sick because the bacteria are not active. People with latent TB infection do not have symptoms, and they cannot spread TB bacteria to others. The concern is for the future, if the TB bacteria **become** active in the body and multiply, the person will go from having latent TB infection to being sick with active TB disease. People with active TB can spread the disease to others. For this reason, people with latent TB infection are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing active TB disease.

### What are the symptoms of active TB?

The general symptoms of TB disease include feelings of fatigue, weight loss, chills, fever and night sweats. If TB disease is in the lungs, the symptoms can include coughing, chest pain, and the coughing up of blood or sputum. Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected.

### **How is TB diagnosed?**

A skin test is the most common way to find out if a person has been exposed to TB infection. There is more than one type of TB skin test; however, the preferred method is the Mantoux test. For this test, a small needle is used to inject testing material, called tuberculin, under the skin of the forearm. Two or three days later, a health worker examines the arm to see if there is a reaction. The test may be “positive” if a bump of a certain size appears on the arm. A blood test, called an IGRA, can also be done as a screening for TB and we find it especially effective in folks with a compromised immune system from illness or medication.

If the skin or blood test is positive, the next step would be to conduct a symptom review and order a chest x-ray. If both of those are negative, then the person is diagnosed with LTBI. If either or both of those are positive, the person will be required to submit 3 sputum samples to rule out active TB disease. The sputum is examined for both smear and culture, and takes up to 6 weeks to finalize. The vast majority of the time, people acquire latent TB, not active TB disease.

### **When is the free testing being offered?**

The Allen County Health Department will be offering free TB tests at the Specialty Services building located at 4817 New Haven Ave (directly behind the Medical Annex building located at 4813 New Haven Ave) on October 10<sup>th</sup> from 3:00-6:00p, October 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-12:00p, and on October 21<sup>st</sup> from 1:00-4:00p.

### **What if you cannot make the scheduled testing times?**

Please contact (260) 449-7504 to schedule an appointment at the Medical Annex. Please indicate that you are a contact to the Cali Nails exposure to ensure your testing will be free of charge.

### **Can TB be treated?**

Yes. Active, drug-susceptible TB can be treated by taking several drugs over a period of 6-9 months. It is very important that people who have TB disease finish the medicine, taking the drugs exactly as prescribed. If they stop taking the drugs too soon, they can become sick again; if they do not take the drugs correctly, the TB bacteria that are still alive may become resistant to those drugs. All of these medications are provided free of charge from the health department.

Latent, “inactive” TB can also be treated by taken a much shorter drug regimen than active TB. The most common treatment for latent TB includes 2 different medications that are taken once a week for 12 weeks. There are several different options for treatment available. Your provider will be able to determine which treatment course will be best for you. These medications are also provided free of charge from the health department.

### **What should I do if I have symptoms?**

If you have a cough that has been present for two weeks or more, and any or all of the above symptoms, you should make an appointment with a doctor. You and your health care provider will then be able to develop an appropriate plan of action to assess the risk of TB.

### **How do you determine who to test after an exposure?**

The health department follows guidelines from the CDC to determine those at the greatest risk of contracting TB. Those people identified as high risk contacts are tested in the first round of testing. If a significant percentage of those contacts test positive on a screening test, then testing is expanded to include medium and low risk contacts if necessary.

**Do I have to worry about being around my family if I was exposed?**

Not typically. As mentioned above, most people that are infected off of an active case of TB are infected with latent TB infection, which is not contagious. If you are not experiencing any of the TB symptoms listed, then you shouldn't be a risk to your family and friends. If you do have symptoms, please contact your doctor or the health department for further testing.

**Can you tell me the name of the person with TB so I know if I am at risk?**

No. We are very restricted in what information we can provide in accordance with state and federal medical confidentiality laws. Any information that could identify the patient- including name, age or race- is confidential under state and federal health care privacy laws. If you are being contacted about testing, it is because you may have had some contact with the individual.

**Why did it take so long for me to get notified?**

Tuberculosis is a very slow growing disease that often takes several months to diagnose. Once you are diagnosed, the infectious period is calculated by counting back 3 months from the time someone's symptoms started. So often times, someone's infectious period is 6-12 months long and they didn't even know it. The health department has to evaluate all of the places that person went during that time and offer testing to those at risk. Even though your exposure was several months ago, we may just be finding out about it now.

**Is the nail salon going to be disinfected?**

There is no need to disinfect the nail salon at this time as TB is spread through the air and must be breathed in to infect someone. TB cannot be spread from touching surfaces, as in the case of viruses such as influenza. TB droplets only stay in the air for a few hours depending on the environment, so there is no longer any risk of getting infected.