



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Travelling and **TB**

Tips to avoid TB



Are you travelling to a country with a high rate of tuberculosis (TB) (countries in Asia, Africa, several countries in South America or Eastern Europe)? You will be at higher risk of becoming infected with TB bacteria. For more information about which countries this travel information applies to, go to www.tbc-online.nl. Following the tips in this leaflet will reduce the risk of infection and disease.

Make an appointment with the Municipal Public Health Service (GGD) TB department or the travel clinic if:

- you will be working in a hospital, prison or institution for the homeless, addicts, refugees or people infected with HIV for one month or longer;
- you have reduced immunity due to illness or medication;
- you will be staying in a country with a high rate of TB for more than three months. This also applies if you visit these countries for shorter periods totalling more than three months in one year;
- you regularly travel to these areas with children under the age of five who have not been vaccinated against TB (BCG vaccine). ‘Regular travel’ means that you expect the child in question to be in these areas for at least three months before the age of five.

What advice can the GGD’s TB department or travel clinic give you?

- Have a skin test or blood test done after you return from your trip. This test will establish whether you have been infected by TB bacteria. If you have, treatment can prevent you from developing TB. Testing is sometimes also recommended before you travel, such as if you have already travelled a lot.
- Have a vaccination against TB before you travel. For effective protection, this vaccination should preferably be given at least six weeks before departure.

What can you do yourself?

TB bacteria are spread mainly by coughing on other people. If possible, stay away from anyone with a persistent cough. Avoid small, poorly ventilated rooms. If that is not possible, take precautionary measures yourself. Turn your face away and breathe through your nose as much as possible. You could also cover your nose and mouth with a scarf or wear a close-fitting face mask.

Contact your general practitioner if you have a persistent cough for more than three weeks. Always tell them that you have been abroad.

The most common TB symptoms are:

- coughing
- weight loss or loss of appetite
- high temperature (fever)
- night sweats

What is TB?

TB is a serious disease caused by bacteria. The disease usually affects the lungs (pulmonary TB). Someone with pulmonary TB can spread the bacteria by coughing. Not everyone who breathes in the bacteria becomes ill. For someone with normal immunity, the chance of disease is about 10%. It takes at least several months for the first symptoms to appear. However, it can be many months or even years before an infected person becomes ill.

What do we do with your data?

The GGD follows the rules of the law in handling your personal data that are stored in your medical file.

Any questions, tips, complaints or compliments about the screening?

Please contact the TB prevention department of the GGD in your region. You can find the contact details on www.ggd.nl and in the vaccination invitation. GGDs have a complaints procedure.

- For more information about TB, go to www.rivm.nl/tuberculose.

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