

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

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PRESS RELEASE

New NICE guidelines launched for World TB Day to tackle tuberculosis in England and Wales

In advance of World TB Day (Friday 24 March), the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the National Collaborating Centre for Chronic Conditions have today (Wednesday 22 March) launched a clinical guideline to help the NHS identify, prevent and treat people with TB in England and Wales.

The guideline sets the gold standard for treating TB by recommending what treatment regimens should be offered to adults and children depending on the type of TB they have and the stage of the disease. Full details of the types and lengths of the treatment regimens recommended can be found in the guideline, which:

- **Will improve adherence to treatment**, by recommending that all patients should have a risk assessment for adherence to treatment to reduce the number of TB patients developing multi-drug resistance.
- **Recommends that everyone with TB should have a named key worker** who should be easily contactable and should facilitate education and involvement of the person with TB in achieving adherence to treatment.
- **Advises that BCG vaccinations should be considered** for all new born babies in areas with a high incidence of TB, for individuals at increased risk in other areas and for selected new entrants from high incidence countries. Routine BCG vaccination of all school age children is not recommended.
- **Recommends that new entrants should be identified for TB screening** based on Port of Arrival reports, new registrations with primary care, entry to education (including universities) and through links with statutory and voluntary groups working with new entrants. The guideline also recommends prisoners should be screened.

- **Recommends that active case finding should be carried out among street homeless people** (including those using direct access hostels for the homeless) by chest X-ray screening on an opportunistic and/or symptomatic basis.

Dr Gillian Leng, Implementation Systems Director at NICE and Executive Lead for this guideline says: “This is the first guideline from NICE that makes recommendations on both the prevention as well as treatment of TB. During development of the guidance, NICE has engaged with a number of national agencies with responsibility for TB, and produced a range of tools to support implementation of the guideline. With the introduction of more effective screening programmes and better monitoring and adherence to treatment, we can make a real difference to the prevalence of TB, and help slow down or even halt the spread of this disease.”

Dr John Hayward, GP and former Director of Public Health, Newham Primary Care Trust and Public Health Advisor and Co-Chair of the Guideline Development Group says: “TB is preventable and curable, but it remains an important public health concern in this country, especially in inner city areas where there is poverty and deprivation. The NICE TB Guideline is a valuable tool not just for the NHS, but will help social services, housing and education to understand TB and help us to eradicate it. The guideline sets the gold standard for prevention, control, diagnosis and treatment. It also identifies priorities for tackling TB, such as screening for individuals at increased risk, vaccination and ways of encouraging adherence to treatment.”

Professor Peter Ormerod, Consultant Physician in Respiratory and General Medicine, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust and Clinical Advisor to the Guideline Development Group says: “The sooner TB is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat. This guideline is not about pointing the finger at the non-UK born who are disproportionately affected by TB, but is about making sure those who have active TB are identified as soon as possible so they can be offered access to treatment as quickly as possible, which both treats their TB and breaks the cycle of transmission between people.”

Professor Peter Davies, Consultant Physician at the Cardiothoracic Centre, Liverpool NHS Trust and British Thoracic Society and TB Alert representative on the guideline development group says: “The NICE guidelines are a major weapon in our fight against tuberculosis. They will enable every patient to be treated with the best available treatment regimen. They also provide clear guidelines for screening for tuberculosis which is the major method for preventing disease. They are also of importance in the world context as countries with similar problems and resources to ourselves are seeking to adapt these guidelines to their own situations.”

Dr Jane Jones, Consultant Epidemiologist at the Health Protection Agency says:

“Though many people in this country may think of TB as a thing of the past, the reality is that it has never gone away. The rates of disease fell dramatically during the 20th century, largely as a result of improvements in social and economic conditions, and reached an all time low in the mid 1980’s. Since this time we have seen a steady increase again, predominantly in urban areas such as London. One of the most important aspects of controlling the disease is ensuring that people who suffer from it are diagnosed quickly and receive an effective course of treatment. The HPA welcomes the NICE guideline because it will strengthen existing practice for treatment and prevention of this serious but curable disease. “

Ndidi Okonta, Patient & Carer representative, London TB Link says : “TB

disproportionately affects some of the most vulnerable people in our society – the homeless and those in poor housing, new entrants and Black and Minority Ethnic groups and those living in inner city areas. The guideline should help ensures the NHS improves the way it prevents, screens, identifies and treats TB for all those affected, no matter where they live or what their background.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

About NICE

1. On 1 April 2005 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence took on the functions of the Health Development Agency to form the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). NICE is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
2. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - **public health** – guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
 - **health technologies** – guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
 - **clinical practice** – guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.