

Tuberculosis - A lethal Infectious Disease

Over the past decades, the prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) remains relatively high. Every year, about 9 million people contract TB worldwide causing deaths for 3 millions. In Hong Kong, there are around 6,000 new TB cases every year, nearly 100 cases were infected in every 100,000 people. Compared with U.S (5.1 cases in every 100,000 people) and Japan (22.8 cases in every 100,000 people), this represents a medium to high prevalence.

Tuberculosis is caused by tubercle bacillus. This bacterium mainly attacks lungs, though it does attack other organs, such as meninges, lymphatic system, bones or genitor-urinary organs. It can remain asymptomatic for many years. Anyone who has continuous cough, fatigue, fever, cough with blood, loss of appetite and/or declining weight, medical advice should be sought.

TB is transmitted by aerosol droplets spreading through the air through coughing, sneezing, or spitting. Elderly, patients with diabetes, AIDS patients and malnourished people have a higher chance of getting infected.

TB patients can be cured by taking medication for six-months. However, some patients did not complete the medication treatment. In the view of this, WHO proposed DOTS (directly observed therapy, short-course), a treatment in which TB patients are closely monitored by medical staff to make sure that all medications were completed.

Personal hygiene is important in the prevention of TB. BCG vaccine complemented with adequate rests, exercises and balanced diets are also essential.