

Recommendations for Employers on Tuberculosis (TB)

1. Guidelines on Managing TB at the Workplace

You are encouraged to provide a supportive environment for infected employees by documenting the organisation's approach on managing TB at the workplace. This sets clear measures and guidelines for all employees to follow. This could include:

- Maintaining the confidentiality of the infected employee.
- Cooperating with TBCU for contact tracing efforts.
- Educating employees on TB management at the workplace.
- Providing flexible or alternative work arrangement for infected employees to take time off for DOT (Directly Observed Therapy).

2. Education of Employees on the Prevention of TB

You are encouraged to provide education on TB as part of normal workplace health initiatives. This is to provide your employees with information about TB and raise awareness about the measures on how to prevent TB transmission, such as:

- What is TB and how it is transmitted.
- Medical treatment for TB.
- Preventive measures at the workplace (where applicable).

Please visit SNEF's website to find out more information:

<https://snef.org.sg/incentives/workplace-safety-and-health/>

3. Medical Screening for TB

Generally, TB screening is only required for occupations with industry-specific regulations (e.g. pre-school teachers) or occupations with exposure to free silica*.

In these occupations, your employees will be required to undergo pre-placement and/or periodic medical examinations before they can be medically certified fit for work by a medical practitioner/designated workplace doctor.

*For more information on the medical examination regulation in these occupations, please refer to this link - https://www.tal.sg/wshc/-/media/TAL/Wshc/Resources/Publications/WSH-Guidelines/Files/WSH_Guidelines_Statutory_Medical_Examinations_2013.pdf

4. Maintaining Confidentiality

The medical information you acquired regarding your employees' TB status is normally given to you in confidence. You should maintain such confidentiality and limit the sharing of such information. This will encourage your employees to disclose their medical condition to you.

You should also seek the permission of the infected employees before disclosing their information to the relevant parties (e.g. employees' immediate supervisors for work scheduling purposes).

5. Segregation of Employees

Employees who are tested positive for TB will be placed on at least 2 weeks of hospitalisation leave. They are generally deemed to be non-infectious after completing the first two weeks of treatment and you do not need be segregate them from other employees when they return to work.

6. Flexible or Alternative Work Arrangements

Employees with TB are required to adhere to the medical treatment by reporting to the healthcare facilities daily for DOT. Where necessary, you should consider providing flexible or alternative work arrangements (e.g. granting flexible time off or staggered start work hours) to support them in completing their treatment.

Please visit TAFEP's website to find out more on flexible work arrangements:
<https://www.tal.sg/tafep/employment-practices/work-life-harmony/fwaa>

FAQs on Tuberculosis (TB)

General Knowledge

1. Should my employees seek treatment if they have latent TB infection?

Employees who are tested positive for latent TB infection should receive preventive therapy if eligible, as this significantly reduces the risk of progression to active TB. However, employees with latent TB are not infectious.

2. Why does my employee need to go for daily treatment? Can't they be given the medications to take on their own?

The World Health Organization (WHO) advocates DOT as the standard of care for all TB patients. The treatment requires a healthcare worker to:

- Ensure that the TB patient takes the correct dosage and combination of TB medications.
- Closely monitor the TB patient's response and adherence to treatment so as to avoid treatment failure, emergence of drug resistance and spread of disease.

Responsibilities

3. What steps do I have to take if my employee has been diagnosed with TB?

If your employee is diagnosed with TB, you should:

- You should continue treating him fairly and with empathy.
- Provide flexible or alternative work arrangements where necessary to allow him to adhere and complete the treatment.
- Disclose the medical condition only to relevant parties after gaining his consent.

4. Can I force my employees to get tested for TB?

Generally, there is no need for you to mandate TB screening on all employees unless they are employed either in occupations with industry-specific regulations (e.g. pre-school teachers) or occupations with exposure to free silica*.

5. Why should I plan for TB management at the workplace?

It is your duty as an employer to take necessary measures, as reasonably practicable, to ensure the safety and health of your employees. Hence, it is important that you prepare a TB management plan as TB infection at the workplace poses a threat to your employees' safety and health and to the community.

Part of the TB management plan is to ensure that the infected employees are treated fairly and with empathy, ensures that any sensitive information is only shared to relevant parties and implement flexible or alternative work arrangements, where necessary, to support them in adhering and completing their medical treatment.

6. What should I do if my employees refuse to work with an infected employee who is deemed non-infectious and has been allowed to return to the workplace?

As part of your role and responsibility in ensuring the overall safety and health of your employees, it is also important that you acknowledge and put in place measures to address and allay their concerns.

To generate awareness and understanding on TB management at the workplace, you can start by providing information on TB as part of the normal workplace health initiatives.

You may contact SNEF for more information.

7. Can I share the information of the infected employee with their supervisor or colleagues?

You should treat the infected employee fairly and with respect by ensuring that any sensitive information is shared only to relevant parties after gaining his consent.