

## **TUBERCULOSIS IN TENNESSEE**

Prepared by The National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis

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### **“CATCHING” TUBERCULOSIS, OR INFECTION:**

Putnam County Herald, Thursday, Cookeville, TN: 30 September 1915

To the man who works for his living, falling sick with tuberculosis means a very real danger not only to his own life but to the lives of his wife and children as well. His wealthier neighbor may lay aside his routine cares and “take the cure” for tuberculosis without materially affecting his family’s health or income. The consumptive working man, on the other hand, must give up his job and with it his only income, and at the same time he is frequently compelled to remain at home, a constant source of danger to his family, unless he is properly instructed. It may save you who read this article considerable money and suffering if you learn from it how to avoid the entrance of tuberculosis into your body.

Tuberculosis is infectious and communicable from one person to another. It differs in some respects from scarlet fever, measles, or smallpox, so-called “contagious” diseases, in that tuberculosis requires repeated exposures and certain special conditions to pass the germs from the sick to the well. It is not inherited, but must be communicated through one of the following sources from one person to another.

1. The infection is derived in the very large majority of cases from the sputum discharged from “open” or ulcerating tubercles in the lungs.
2. A certain number of persons, chiefly infants, estimated variously from one to ten per cent, of all cases, receive the infection from the milk of tuberculous cows.
3. A very few others may possibly obtain the infection from the urine and fecal discharges of consumptives or from pus joints or other parts of the body.
4. In a few extremely rare instances though the blood of the mother to an unborn.
5. No infection can be conveyed from tuberculosis of the “closed” or non-ulcerated variety, or after completely healed.

With regard to the manner of infection still placing in mind that tuberculosis must be communicated from one person to another, we find that by far the most frequent mode of infection is by inhalation; the second is by swallowing, and the least common, by inoculation of a wound or abrasion. Considering each of these modes of infection a little more carefully, we learn that:

1. The bacilli are inhaled most often in dust. The dust is most often contaminated by careless spitting, but the germs may also be given out in the act of coughing (with the mouth unprotected) or hawking, sneezing, loud talking, singing or laughing. Quite breathing carries no infection.

2. The bacilli may be swallowed with food which has been contaminated with infected hands or otherwise, and also with the milk, butter and other dairy products derived from cows suffering from bovine tuberculosis.
3. Inoculation by the infection of cuts, scratches, or abrasions is not frequently observed.

While no age, race, or class is immune against infection from tuberculosis, children are more susceptible than anyone else. At the age of 15, frequently as high as 75 per cent of the population may show the presence of the germs though not that many may be sick with tuberculosis. In view, however, of the fact that these germs may lay quiet in the body of the child for years, until with unfavorable surroundings his resistance is lowered, causing the disease to develop, it is extremely important that fathers and mothers do everything possible to keep their children away from danger of infection in their earlier years.

Everything should be done at home to keep the child rugged and healthy. The father and mother, whether they have tuberculosis or not, should be scrupulously careful in their habits of spitting and personal hygiene. The working father owes it not only to his own health, but to that of his children to avoid tuberculosis in every possible way.

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### **DANGER SIGNALS OF TUBERCULOSIS**

Putnam County Herald, Thursday, Cookeville, TN: 25 November 1915

In a previous article, it was stated that nearly everybody has tuberculosis at some time or other during his lifetime. Autopsies on people have shown that hardly a single human being reaches mature life without a scar on his lungs or elsewhere showing where tuberculosis had warded off the continuation of the attack.

Because tuberculosis is so widespread, every man, woman and children should give the most careful attention to those signs of the disease which point out danger. The treacherous disease germs may enter the body in early childhood and may not cause any serious trouble for ten or fifteen years. Then, all of a sudden when the body is weakened by overwork, worry, sickness, or bad living and working conditions, these sleeping germs wake up and become active in the destruction of the lungs or other organs. The working man or woman, therefore, cannot be too careful in the safeguarding of health and in watching out for those symptoms which indicate that the disease of tuberculosis is actually present. What, then, are some of the danger signals and what should be done about them?

1. First of all, there is a cough that hangs on and will not clear up. If it lasts for a month or longer, it is a red light, a danger signal, which you cannot afford to ignore. It may start with wet feet or some other insignificant circumstance, but no matter how the cough started, if it does not go away, see your doctor at once.

Colds frequently weaken the bodily tone and resistance, so that it is easy for the lurking germs to get a foothold.

2. Loss of weight, accompanied by a loss of appetite, and a certain amount of stomach trouble is another danger signal, which you must not pass unheeded. Sometimes loss of weight may come from some other cause than tuberculosis, but it pays to be on your guard. You may not have a cough, and you may experience very little trouble except a sort of chronic weariness. You ought to know what your normal weight should be. If you begin to lose five, ten or more pounds without any apparent reason, look for sound medical advice at once. Sometimes with loss of weight goes a loss of appetite, and trouble with bowels and stomach, even running to diarrhea. Whether you are losing much weight or not, look out for this danger signal. It is a warning that something is wrong.
3. Then there is that run-down, all-the-time feeling. Most people have days when they feel unusually tired, for some reason or other. Such an occasional period of "spring fever" or "lazy liver" may not be at all dangerous, but when every day for two or three weeks you hate to get up and dread to do anything but lie around and be lazy, there is danger ahead. This is Nature's warning to you that some enemy inside your body is sapping your vitality. Don't ignore the warning signal!
4. Anyone of the three symptoms just mentioned may occur singly or all of them may come at one time. When, to any or all, there is added a fever in the late afternoon or during the night accompanied possibly by sweats, beware of this danger signal. It is a bright red flag which Nature waves before you, cautioning you to give immediate heed. Anyone's temperature may rise at times, some people's more easily than other. But when for a week every afternoon about four or five o'clock you've felt feverish, or when night after night you wake up in a dripping sweat, you may rest assured that there is nothing normal about that. Go to your doctor at once and tell him about it. You may have no cough and no other sign of disease, and this may be the only warning you'll get. Give heed to it at once.
5. If you have a cough and in spitting you find streaks of blood in your sputum, you may rest assured that something is wrong. It may not be a direct sign of tuberculosis, but whatever it is, you should attend to it at once. You cannot afford to waste time putting it off. Nature may give you that more emphatic warning of the presence of tuberculosis, a hemorrhage of the lungs. If so, don't be scared unduly. It is a danger signal, and if you heed it, you may be safe.

There are other danger signals, some which you can see and some which only a trained physician can detect. Your safety lies in getting medical attention as early as possible. Tuberculosis can be cured if it is discovered in time. The time to discover it is when the first symptoms show themselves. Don't take chances with Death. You'll lose every time.

Go to the doctor, if you notice any of these danger signals, and insist that he examine you stripped to the waist. If you can't afford a doctor, go to a free clinic and be examined. It may cost a few dollars to be examined, but it may save you hundreds of dollars, untold suffering, and possibly your life and that of your wife and family.

“SAFETY FIRST” is a motto that applies to tuberculosis, especially when it is first showing itself.

Note: This is the fourth of a Series of Five Articles Prepared by The National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, New York City).

### **TUBERCULOSIS IN TENNESSEE**

By Dr. J. C. Wilson, of Rockwood

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: 25 June 1931

The insurance companies place a value of \$26,000 upon a human life. We are losing more than 3,000 lives from tuberculosis in Tennessee each year, which if we wish to express it in dollars is a wasteful loss of \$78,000,000.

There are 50,000 active cases in Tennessee. Of these, 25,000 are taking treatment and losing their labor, which will amount to at least \$1,000, making \$25,000,000 more.

It is estimated that it will cost \$5,000 from some source or sources to care for a family of three or four, left without the support of father or mother. There are over 1,000 such cases every year in Tennessee, making \$5,000,000 more.

This low estimate on the financial loss in Tennessee amounts to \$133,000,000.

It is absolutely within our power to stamp it out entirely. We have been committing a sin of omission. Shall it be a sin of commission?

Tuberculosis is a heart-breaking disease. Tennessee has the highest tuberculosis death rate. Tennessee is making the least progress to reduce it.

Tuberculosis leaves a trail of misery, squalor, poverty, distress and mourning, followed by a never-ending chain of new cases – oftentimes completely wiping out whole families.

The population of Tennessee is composed of the purest blooded Americans in America – descendants of the aristocracy of Europe. Yet how little is done for their health and preservation compared to other states whose population is made up a largely of the low type of aliens.

It is definitely proven that a large proportion of the children twelve years old and over are infected with tuberculosis.

The overload of the strain of high school life, work in factory or store, or social duties may and often does cause a breakdown.

The seeds of this disease are sown in early childhood age.

Children reared in a house where an adult has the disease are almost sure to be infected.

The germs are deposited in the lungs or throat or some other portion of the body and usually lie dormant for some years.

About the time young adulthood blossoms with all its promise, the dreadful symptoms of tuberculosis develop and the real struggle begins.

At the age when the strain of establishing and supporting a family is greatest and when life is sweetest those whose fight against the disease has been unsuccessful break down.

The greatest toll is taken during the twenties, thirties and forties – the best and most productive period of life.

The germ is spread by those who have the disease. If the germ were carried by mosquitoes, rats, fleas or water the problem of eradicating it would be easy. These people are spreaders and each case acts as a focus for the infection of others, especially the young.

Fresh air, sunshine, good food and rest are the great essentials of the cure but even these things have to be intelligently administered and the patient demands constant care and faithfulness.

The tuberculosis sanatorium provides a place where the dangerous spreaders may go. Every case thus removed from the community adds that much to the safety of others.

While in the sanatorium the patient learns how to protect others, so that he is intelligent and conscientious. He may return to his former home and community without great danger of infecting others.

This training is not acquired in a day or by reading pamphlets, but is cultivated by daily association with the doctor and nurse in company with others who are practicing the same routine.

The sanatorium is the best place to get well under the intelligent supervision of a physician experienced in tuberculosis, as to the needs of the particular patient and regulated according to the particular stage of the disease.

The house treatment from a public health standpoint cannot be effective – it does not separate the spreaders of the disease from the healthy or uninfected.

Experience has taught us that there should be as many available hospital beds as there are deaths from tuberculosis per year.

Tennessee has the highest resident death rate of any state of the United States, including those states where tuberculosis patients go for treatment. It is a special problem and calls for strenuous measures.

## **WARNING AGAINST TYPHOID ISSUED**

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

25 June 1931

Summer time is “danger time” for that large number of citizens who enjoy picnicking and camping in the open.

There is a constant danger of contracting typhoid fever by drinking water from questionable sources.

In order to avoid the danger of contracting typhoid, picnic parties should carry with them sufficient water for drinking purposes. Dishes and pans should not be washed in streams and springs of a questionable character.

Food should not be spread upon the ground or on tables where flies might light upon it. Mosquito netting, if spread over the food, will keep the flies from contaminating the food. Flies are to be considered as potential typhoid carriers.

Do not swim in water that might be contaminated. A small quantity taken into the mouth would be sufficient to cause illness if the water is polluted.

Campers should observe the same safeguards as those suggested for picnickers. In addition special attention should be given to adequate toilet facilities. Advice regarding such facilities can be secured from the State sanitary engineers.

\*Read more about the History of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>