
**Imperial College
London**

**Tuberculosis:
Information for Medical
Students Working Abroad**

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**Occupational Health
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1. Introduction:

TB is a serious disease with prevalence being high in many of your chosen elective countries. A cumulative exposure of 8 hours or more with an infectious patient is generally accepted as an appreciable risk. This risk will increase for those students in high incident countries and if working in high exposure departments.

You have a responsibility to control the risk.

- I. High Risk Specialities: HIV ward or clinic / TB ward or Clinics / Respiratory medicine / A&E / Infectious Diseases
- II. High Risk Patients: those with HIV, TB
- III. High Risk Procedures: sputum induction, bronchoscopy, intubation

Assess the risk posed by the incidence of TB in the area:

high risk is usually defined as more than 40 cases per 100,000/year in a population.

Consider speciality of elective work: considerations here relate to the nature of the placement (e.g. TB ward versus a community obstetric unit) and/or specific occurrences of significant exposure to someone with TB e.g. bronchoscopy, etc. Length of contact with an infectious individual is considered relevant with standard practice to regard 8 or more hours cumulative contact as significantly increasing risk of transmission of TB.

2. Is Respiratory Protective Equipment provided?

If not, masks can be purchased from the OH department.

3. Managing risk during elective:

Comply with infection control policies such as wearing of masks, minimising contact time and/or exposure in high risk situations.

4. On Return

You will be sent a letter from the FEO informing you of what to do if you experience any symptoms of TB.

Symptoms of TB:

- Persistent cough often with sputum, can be bloody
- Weight loss
- Lack of appetite
- High temperature of 38C or above
- Night sweats
- Extreme tiredness
- A sense of feeling unwell

Occupational Health (OH) is happy to advise if required. Please note that you do not need to have travelled abroad to be at risk of infection. When you begin your work in your first F1 post, you should inform your Trust's OH Department if you have had exposure to TB infection and if you have recently worked abroad. The Trust OH Service may wish to screen you for latent TB and treat you for this, if you tested positive, to guard

against future risk to vulnerable patients if you later developed active tuberculosis. For this screening to be reliable, it should be carried out at least six weeks after the end of the period of potential exposure i.e. at least 6 weeks after you finished your elective (testing too early can produce a false negative result). This will be once you have started your F1 post

5. Your duties:

Medical Students have a duty

- To comply with control of infection policies of hosting organisations and good clinical practice
- To comply with medical school health checks on return from elective
- To consider responsibility to self and patients in line with GMC guidance
- To recognise symptoms and if present seek appropriate medical advice

All students should remain vigilant for symptoms of TB on return from elective.