

# Tuberculosis Learning Activity



## Waking Up the TB Germ

**TB Fact:** If you are close with someone who has active TB disease, you may become infected with TB germs and develop sleeping TB infection.

**Purpose:** This activity demonstrates the difference between sleeping TB infection (medically known as Latent TB Infection (LTBI)) and active TB disease. It also demonstrates how sleeping TB infection may change to active TB disease.

### Key messages:

- People with sleeping TB infection are not sick and cannot infect other people
- For most people, their immune system is strong enough to make sure that their sleeping TB infection will never turn into active TB disease
- A small number of people with sleeping TB infection do get sick with active TB disease
- Other infections, stress, certain lifestyle choices, and unhealthy environments weaken the immune system and can cause sleeping TB disease to turn into active TB disease

### Preparation:

- Clear a space large enough for the group to move around freely
- Review narration to ensure facilitation goes smoothly

### Supplies (optional):

- Signs or props the different players of the game

**Description of the activity:** Youth will engage in a drama exercise narrated by a facilitator that shows:

- how the immune system ensures that once someone is infected with TB it remains latent in the body,
- how the immune system can be weakened, and
- what happens if the immune system is not functioning properly.

Narration of the Game:

1. Ask for a volunteer to be the 'TB germ'.

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For additional learning activities and more information about the Taima TB projects, see:

**[taimatb.tunngavik.com](http://taimatb.tunngavik.com)**

2. Imagine that the room is the lungs of our patient. Ask the group to give our patient a name (refer to our patient by name for the rest of the game).
3. The TB germ starts the game fast asleep in our patient's lungs (i.e. on the floor). SNORE! It is not making the patient sick. Our patient has sleeping TB infection.
4. The rest of the group are the 'cells of the immune system'. The immune system is the part of the body that fights germs and keeps our patient from getting sick
5. The 'cells of the immune system' (i.e. the group) surround the 'TB germ'.
6. The 'TB germ' wakes up and tries to get out of the circle to make the patient sick but the 'immune system' does not allow the germ out (i.e. the person playing the TB germ tries to push his/her way out of the circle but the rest of the group keeps him/her in).
7. The 'TB germ' goes back to sleep. This is what usually happens in a healthy body.
8. Remove a few 'cells of the immune system' (i.e. take a couple of people out of the circle) are taken out of the game to represent an immune system weakened by smoking, stress, poor nutrition, addictions, other infections.
9. The 'TB germ' wakes up and tries to get out. It goes back to sleep when it finds out that it can't get out.
10. One by one take away 'cells of the immune system' away until the 'TB germ' is successful at getting out.
11. The 'TB germ' is now free in the lungs and the rest of the body to make the patient sick and be breathed out of the body and infect other people. Our patient has active TB disease.
12. Bring the group back together with the 'cells of the immune system' surrounding the 'TB germ' who is sleeping again on the floor. Explain that there is one way of killing the 'TB germ' for good, so that it won't wake up. Medication!

**Teaching points:**

- Ask questions of the participants to encourage them to reflect on what the elements of the game represent:
  - How sleeping TB infection is kept asleep by the immune system. What happens when the immune system isn't working well.
  - How sleeping TB infection turns to active TB disease
  - How the TB germ can be killed so that it doesn't turn to active TB disease.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes