



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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Tuberculosis (TB): What Consumers Need to Know

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls upon consumers to avoid crowded, enclosed and poorly ventilated spaces, as these increase the risk of tuberculosis (TB) transmission.

This is in view of the recent resurgence of TB in Malaysia. TB is an airborne infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It most commonly affects the lungs but can affect almost any tissue or organ in the body.

When the lungs are infected, possible symptoms include a persistent cough and fever, coughing up blood, night sweats, and weight loss.

The disease is spread through the air from one person to another. TB bacteria are released into the air when a person with the disease coughs, speaks, or sneezes.

TB bacteria can remain in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. They are more likely to spread in indoor areas or other places with poor air circulation, such as a closed vehicle, than in outdoor areas.

Individuals who breathe in the bacteria may become infected with TB. However, not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes ill. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: inactive TB and active TB disease.

People with active TB disease are most likely to spread TB germs to those they spend time with, such as family members, friends, coworkers, or schoolmates.

According to health experts, inactive or latent TB bacteria can be reactivated due to declining immunity that comes with ageing, as well as exposure to other diseases and treatments that affect immunity. Covid 19 could increase susceptibility to TB if it causes residual lung injury after the initial infection.

It may sound like a disease of the past, but tuberculosis, or TB, remains a real concern today. As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In other words, the best way to remain well is to avoid getting sick in the first place.

Given the present situation, consumers are encouraged to undergo early screening for TB and adopt a healthy lifestyle to maintain optimal immunity and prevent this infectious disease.

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