International students are 10 times more likely to develop tuberculosis (TB) than people born in Australia.

If you are from a country in Asia, Africa, the Indian sub-continent, South America or Eastern Europe it’s likely you have been exposed to TB and are at a higher risk of being infected and getting sick from TB.

TB is an infectious disease that affects the lungs, other organs and bones. TB can be cured with medication but it can be fatal if left untreated.

Around 14 million people have active TB and about one third of the world’s population has a latent or silent TB infection.

Medication to treat TB is free in Australia

Students who are diagnosed with TB while in Australia will not have to pay for medication to treat it. Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) will help cover costs associated with diagnosis.

If diagnosed with TB, students will not be asked to leave Australia

If students get treated for TB, it will not affect the conditions of their student visas as long as they comply with treatment.

TB Symptoms

Seek medical advice and give the doctor this fact sheet if you have any of these symptoms:

- cough or fever for more than 2 weeks
- excessive tiredness
- night sweats
- poor appetite and weight loss
- coughing up blood

However, some people with active TB will have no symptoms.

TB Spread

TB bacteria are spread from person to person through the air. People with active TB disease in their lungs can spread the infection when they cough, sneeze, laugh, speak or sing.
Tuberculosis warning for international students

You can have TB even if:

- You have been vaccinated
  The TB vaccine (BCG) helps protect young children against severe forms of TB. Even if you were vaccinated you can still get TB.

- You have been checked for TB
  The Visa Medical Screen includes a chest x-ray to look for active or infectious TB. Many people will have latent or silent TB infection which is not found on a chest x-ray. Latent or silent TB does not cause any symptoms but can progress to active and infectious TB months or years after screening.

- You don’t know anyone with TB
  It is possible that you might have been exposed to TB without knowing it. Some people with TB have no symptoms and may not know they have active TB disease.

Where to get help after arriving in Australia

Talk to your doctor, university health service or local hospital — keep this fact sheet to give to your doctor if you have any symptoms of TB.

Call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222 or visit: www.healthdirect.gov.au/tuberculosis

Visit your state or territory health department’s website:

- ACT Department of Health
  www.health.act.gov.au

- NSW Ministry of Health

- NT Government Department of Health
  www.health.nt.gov.au

- QLD Department of Health
  www.health.qld.gov.au

- SA Health
  www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

- TAS Department of Health & Human Services
  www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

- Victorian Tuberculosis Program
  www.rmh.mh.org.au

- WA Tuberculosis Control Program