

What is Mycobacterium bovis (*M. bovis*)?

M. bovis is a germ in the family of bacteria that causes tuberculosis. *M. bovis* causes a type of tuberculosis (TB) that can affect both people and animals such as cattle.

In people, *M. bovis* usually affects the lymph nodes in the neck or organs of the digestive system. It can also affect the lungs or other organs. It is a treatable and curable disease.

Young children and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for developing *M. bovis* disease.

How is *M. bovis* transmitted to people?

People are usually infected by eating or drinking unpasteurized dairy products from areas where *M. bovis* is present in cattle.

Less commonly, *M. bovis* is spread through the air when a person with the disease in their lungs coughs or sneezes.

From 2004-2006, 87 people were diagnosed with M. bovis TB in San Diego. Of these, 98% were Hispanic and many had a history of eating fresh cheese from Mexico.



What are the symptoms of *M. bovis* tuberculosis?

Symptoms depend on the part of the body affected, but can include:

- **Abdominal pain**
- **Lymph node swelling in the neck**
- **Coughing for more than 3 weeks**

General symptoms of *M. bovis* tuberculosis may include fever, night sweats and weight loss.

Is *M. bovis* tuberculosis curable?

Yes! Tuberculosis is treated with a combination of antibiotics taken for at least 9 months. However, if left untreated, it can be fatal.



Why are some dairy products dangerous?

Dairy products, such as queso fresco, are sometimes made by unlicensed cheese makers using unpasteurized milk in unsanitary conditions or transported unrefrigerated from an unsafe source.

If the milk comes from cows infected with *M. bovis*, the cheese can be contaminated with these germs.

This cheese is often sold at swap meets or by street and door-to-door vendors. It is generally made in Mexico.

How can I protect myself from *M. bovis*?

Only eat dairy products that are commercially sealed and labeled “pasteurized” and found in the refrigerated section of the store.

- **DO NOT** eat cheese sold by street vendors without a health permit or door-to-door vendors.
- **DO NOT** drink or eat raw milk or raw milk products that may be contaminated with *M. bovis*.



What should I do if I have eaten unpasteurized dairy products?

Call your doctor if you have symptoms of TB or are concerned that you have eaten unpasteurized dairy products, which could be contaminated with *M. bovis*. TB can be effectively treated.



If you have no healthcare provider, testing and treatment are available at:

**County of San Diego TB Control Program
(619) 692-8600**

For more information on food safety or how to file a complaint about an illegal vendor call:

**San Diego County
Department of Environmental Health Food
& Housing Division
(619) 338-2283**

For more information on regulations for fresh cheese call:

**California Department of Food and
Agriculture
(916) 654-0773**



For more information on how to get tested for TB call (619) 692-8600.



County of San Diego
Health and Human Services Agency
TB Control Program
3851 Rosecrans Street
San Diego, CA 92110-3115
(619) 692-8600
www.sandiegotbcontrol.org

***You may qualify for Medi-Cal benefits.**
People with TB infection or TB disease may also qualify for TB-Cal. To find out about your eligibility and to request an information packet and application, please call 1-858-514-6885 or toll free 1-866-262-9881*

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County of San Diego

Tuberculosis and Queso Fresco



Eat Safe Cheese!