

Taking Medication for Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)

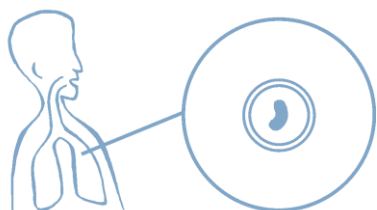
You have a positive skin test. This means that you have TB germs sleeping inside your body. This is called **latent TB infection (LTBI)**. You can take medication to prevent the sleeping TB germs from waking up and becoming **active TB disease**.

How did I get the TB germs?

At some point in your life, you spent lots of time with someone who had TB disease in their lungs. When they sneezed or coughed, the TB germs spread in the air, and you breathed them into your lungs. Your immune system is keeping the TB germs asleep right now.

What is the difference between TB infection and TB disease?

TB infection



If your immune system is strong, it can wall off the TB germs and keep them asleep.

- You **do not feel sick**
- You cannot spread TB (non-contagious)
- TB germs are **asleep** inside your body
- Positive skin test
- Chest x-ray may be normal

Take medication to prevent TB disease!

TB disease



If your immune system is weak, the TB germs may wake up and begin to grow.

- You feel **sick**
 - Cough (more than 3 weeks)
 - Fever
 - Feel tired
 - Loss of appetite
 - Weight loss
 - Night sweats
- You can spread TB (**contagious** – if lung TB)
- TB germs are **awake** and **growing** inside your body
- X-ray shows TB in your lungs or other parts of the body

LTBI medication is free

There are several treatment options: isoniazid (INH), rifampin (RMP), or a combination of both. Talk to your Doctor or Nurse to see which treatment for LTBI is best for you.

Taking LTBI medication

- Treatment for TB infection may take 4 to 9 months.
- Take your medication every day as this will ensure the most effective treatment. Stopping your medication too soon can put you at risk for TB reactivation in the future.
- Set an alarm or use a mobile app to help you remember to take your medication every day.
- TB medication work best on an empty stomach. If it upsets your stomach, you may take it with a little bit food to prevent this.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking TB medication. Taking TB medication with alcohol could damage your liver.
- INH and RMP are safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Only stop taking your medication if you experience any side effects (see list below).

Possible medication side effects

Most people feel well, but LTBI medication can make some people feel sick.

Call your Doctor or Nurse right away if you have

- Nausea or vomiting
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Fever
- Very dark urine
- Loss of appetite
- Skin rash or itchy skin
- Feeling very tired or weak
- A tingling feeling in fingers or toes (vitamin B6 is often taken with INH to prevent this)

Can I still get active TB disease after I take LTBI medication?

People who take the TB medication every day for LTBI according to their treatment plan almost never get sick with active TB disease.

Reasons to take LTBI medication

- Avoid being sick. Fewer pills are needed to treat TB infection. Treatment for active TB disease requires taking more medication.
- If you get sick with active TB disease, you may not be able to participate in your daily activities such as work and school for a certain period of time.
- Protect yourself, your family and friends

Questions? Please call Toronto Public Health TB Prevention Team: **(416) 392-7457**
or e-mail us: **targettb@toronto.ca**