

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious illness that usually affects the lungs. It is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. There are two forms of TB: Inactive TB Infection and Active TB Disease. Most people with TB have Inactive TB Infection. A TB skin test can be done to see if you have been infected with TB. If your skin test is positive, more tests need to be done to make sure you do not have Active TB Disease and to help you get the proper treatment.

Inactive TB infection	Active TB Disease
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB bacteria in your body are not growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB bacteria in your body are growing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive TB skin test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive TB skin test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms may be present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest X-ray shows no active TB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abnormal chest X-ray or CT scan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No TB bacteria in sputum test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sputum test shows TB bacteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Not</u> contagious. People cannot catch TB from you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contagious if TB bacteria are found in lung
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication <u>can</u> be taken to prevent Inactive TB from becoming Active TB Disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple medications <u>must</u> be taken to stop symptoms and the spread of TB

On average, 1600 people are diagnosed with Active TB Disease in Canada each year

What are some of the symptoms of Active TB Disease?

- Cough
- Fever
- Night sweats/chills
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Chest pain

How is TB treated?

Active TB Disease: Treatment involves taking up to four antibiotics every day and may last for up to 2 years. You will be isolated for a period of time so you do not spread the disease to others.

Inactive TB Infection: Your doctor may recommend that you take one or more medications every day for up to 9 months to help prevent you from developing Active TB Disease in the future.

1 out of 3 people in the world has Inactive TB Infection

When is TB treatment necessary?

Active TB Disease: Treatment must be taken to get better and to prevent the spread of infection to others.

Inactive TB Infection: Treatment is not mandatory; however it can reduce the risk of developing Active TB Disease to less than 1% in some cases. Certain chronic medical conditions increase your chances of developing Active TB Disease, making prevention even more important.

TB is preventable, treatable and curable

Treatment of Inactive TB Infection is important for:

People who have:

- any medical condition that affects the immune system (e.g. HIV or Diabetes)
- been recently exposed to someone with active TB

People who:

- are immigrants, refugees or travelers from areas with high rates of TB even if they have received BCG vaccine
- work at, or are residents of, health care facilities, homeless shelters, or correctional facilities
- are taking medication that can affect the immune system e.g. corticosteroids
- are underweight (less than 90% of ideal body weight)

Should people who have had a BCG vaccination take medication for Inactive TB Infection?

BCG is a TB vaccine that is often given to people who are born in countries where there is a lot of TB. Sometimes this vaccine can make your TB skin test positive. However, treatment for Inactive TB Infection should still be considered even if you had the BCG vaccine in the past. It is more likely that your positive TB skin test is from an exposure to someone with Active TB Disease than from your BCG vaccination. BCG vaccine will not stop you from getting Active TB Disease.

What are the side effects of medications taken for Inactive TB Infection?

Isoniazid and Rifampin are the medications most often used to treat Inactive TB Infection. As with all medications, allergic reactions and side effects may occur. However, most people taking these medications do not have major side effects and allergic reactions are very rare. Symptoms such as headache, muscle aches, and nausea are most common and normally only last a few weeks.

These medications may affect your liver. Your doctor should monitor your symptoms and test your blood regularly. The treatment of Active TB Disease involves taking more medications, so there is a greater risk that side effects will occur. For more information about medication side effects, talk to your doctor.

Important information about taking medication:

- ✓ It is important to take this medication as ordered by your doctor.
- ✓ Alcohol should be avoided while taking this medication. It could damage your liver.
- ✓ You should tell your doctor if you are taking any other medications.
- ✓ It is best not to get pregnant or breastfeed while on this medication. Talk to your doctor about birth control.

**All TB medication is free.
Your doctor can order
these medications from
the Health Unit**

For more information contact:

The Infectious Disease Control Team
Middlesex-London Health Unit
519-663-5317 ext. 2330

Resources

Stop TB Partnership
www.stoptb.org
Public Health Agency of Canada
www.publichealth.gc.ca
Canadian Lung Association
www.lung.ca
World Health Organization
www.who.int/topics/tuberculosis

Middlesex-London Health Unit
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Tuberculosis Can be Prevented With Medication



Treatment Facts