

Latent Tuberculosis (TB)

Respiratory Centre

Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection which can be treated. Worldwide, TB remains a relatively common cause of illness. If you have contact with someone with TB, you may not become infected, however some people develop either **active TB** or **latent TB**.

Active TB

People with **active TB** usually have symptoms which can include weight loss, drenching night sweats and persistent coughs. With active TB, people usually have abnormal X-rays and we may find the TB bacteria in their sputum (phlegm) or in samples from other parts of the body such as lymph nodes (or glands).

People with **active TB** must have treatment to stop them becoming more unwell. In some cases, active TB can cause serious illness or even death.

Some people with **active TB** can spread TB to others, although this is not always the case: your nurse or doctor can advise you on this. Treatment will prevent you spreading the infection to others.

Latent TB

If you are diagnosed with **latent TB**, at some point in your lifetime you have been infected with TB. However, **latent TB** means that the TB is living in your body, but it is not growing and is not currently causing you any harm.

You **cannot** spread TB infection to others if you have latent TB.

People with **latent TB** usually do not have any symptoms. They usually have either normal X-rays or X-rays which show signs of scars from an old infection. If samples are sent, they would not show any infection.

If you have latent TB, you can choose to receive treatment to reduce the chance of the TB becoming active in the future.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

How is Latent TB diagnosed?

You are diagnosed with latent TB if you have either:

1. A positive skin test (a Mantoux test)

OR

2. A positive blood test (an IGRA or a T-spot test or a Quantiferon test).

If either test is positive, you would also have further tests to make sure that you do not have active TB.

I have never had any symptoms, so how can I have latent TB?

If you have latent TB you may not have any symptoms. When resting, the TB bacteria do not cause you any harm, or any symptoms. However, there is a risk of the TB becoming active again at some point in the future.

What is the risk of having latent TB?

If you have latent TB, at some point this may become active again. For every 10 people with latent TB, approximately one person will develop active TB in their lifetime.

If you have had recent contact with someone with active TB who was very infectious, your chance of developing active TB is higher.

Your risk of developing active TB in the future will also be higher if your immune system is not as strong as the average person. For example, if you have diabetes, HIV, or cancer; or you are on long term medications that can affect your immune system such as steroid tablets or treatments for rheumatoid arthritis.

However, even if you are healthy, you may develop active TB.

Can Latent TB be treated?

If you have latent TB, you can choose to have treatment to reduce your chance of developing active TB in the future.

Treatment for latent TB is around 90% effective, so it does not completely stop you developing active TB in the future, however, it offers a very good chance.

How is latent TB treated?

Most people receive 3 months of Rifinah tablets. **You would need to take the tablets every day, first thing in the morning at least 30 minutes before food.**

Are there any side-effects from treatment for latent TB?

All treatments carry some risk. The most important risk of treatment is that up to 3 in 100 people can develop liver side-effects.

You will have a blood test before treatment and 2 weeks after starting treatment to check your liver blood tests.

Even if liver side-effects happen, the vast majority of people's livers fully recover, and significant harm is very rare. **If you develop yellowing of the eyes, or vomiting or pain in the tummy that does not go away, speak to a healthcare professional immediately.**

The tablets will cause your urine to turn orange, and your tears may be slightly orange. This is normal.

The tablets may **stop** the oral contraceptive pill working. If you take this treatment ask for advice. You must use other methods of contraception whilst you are on treatment.

Are there any alternatives to treatment for latent TB?

All the effective medications for latent TB may rarely cause liver side-effects. However, you need to weigh up the risk of this against the risk of developing active TB in the future.

If you develop **active TB in the future**, then you would need at least 6 months of treatment with a combination of medications. The medications for active TB are much more likely to cause side-effects (including liver side-effects) than the treatment for latent TB. Active TB can make you seriously unwell, and you could spread the infection to others.

If you have latent TB, and do not want to have treatment you can have a repeat chest X-ray after 6 months and then again at 12 months.

Does the food I eat or alcohol affect treatment?

You should NOT drink alcohol whilst on treatment as it can make treatment less effective, and will increase the risk of liver side-effects.

A healthy balanced diet may help. Also, you should avoid eating fatty food regularly (including take-aways). You should also avoid cheese, too much tea or coffee, and certain fish (especially tuna, mackerel and salmon). These can make you feel unwell, flushed, faint or make your heart race whilst on treatment.

If I have chest X-rays rather than treatment for latent TB, can I still get active TB?

Yes. The X-rays may help to diagnose active TB earlier however, they will not stop you getting active TB. Also, if you have latent TB, you can develop active TB at **any time** in the future. **If you have a cough for more than 3 weeks, start to lose weight or start to have drenching night sweats: let your GP or TB team know.**

1. Most people with latent TB have no or very few symptoms
2. Treatment for latent TB is very effective, but there is still a small chance of you developing active TB if you have this treatment
3. Treatment for latent TB may cause side-effects, but the chance of this happening is much less than if you have to have treatment for active TB
4. If you do not have treatment for latent TB, you have at least a one in ten chance of developing active TB. This is much greater than your chance of having serious side-effects with treatment for latent TB.

Are there any tests to confirm the treatment for latent TB has been successful?

Unfortunately not: the skin tests or blood test often remain positive lifelong despite effective treatment. It is therefore very important to take treatment every day for as long as recommended by your healthcare team.

Any questions?

Use the website <https://www.thetruthabouttb.org/>

Or speak to your TB nursing team on 01902 695940

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。