

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS INFECTION (LTBI)



Tuberculosis, or “TB,” is a disease caused by germs called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria. There are two conditions caused by TB bacteria: latent TB infection (LTBI) and [TB disease](#). Tuberculosis, or TB disease, is when TB germs are actively growing in your body because your immune system cannot stop them from growing. They make you sick.

LTBI means you have TB germs in your body without making you sick. If you have LTBI, you do not feel sick and cannot spread TB germs to others. However, TB germs may become active in your body and start to grow. If this happens you will go from having LTBI to being sick with TB disease. If you have TB disease, you can get very sick and spread TB to other people.

How did I get LTBI?



- ▶ TB germs are spread through the air from one person to another. TB germs are put into the air when someone with TB disease coughs, laughs, sings or sneezes. If you breathe air that has TB germs, you may get LTBI.
- ▶ You **cannot** get TB from shaking hands, sitting on toilet seats, or sharing food and drinks.
- ▶ You will not know that you have LTBI unless you have a TB skin or blood test.
- ▶ If left untreated, LTBI can turn into TB disease.

What tests are available for LTBI?



- ▶ The TB skin test (Mantoux test) or TB blood test will show if you are likely to have TB germs in your body.
- ▶ If your TB skin test or TB blood test is positive, your doctor may also do a chest x-ray to look for signs of TB disease.
- ▶ If your chest x-ray does not show signs of TB disease and you are not sick, you will be diagnosed with LTBI.

How will I know if I have LTBI?



- ▶ Usually have a positive TB skin test or TB blood test
- ▶ Usually have a normal chest x-ray
- ▶ No TB germs found in sputum (phlegm) tests
- ▶ Cannot pass the TB germs to other people
- ▶ Do not feel sick





How is LTBI treated?

There are medicines that you can take to prevent you from getting TB disease. The medication kills the TB germs before they have a chance to make you sick. There are currently three treatment options:

- ▶ Isoniazid (INH) and rifapentine taken once a week for 3 months.
- ▶ Rifampin taken daily for 4 months.
- ▶ Isoniazid (INH) taken daily for 6-9 months.

These different treatment options are all effective. Talk with your doctor to see which option is right for you. A chest x-ray is required before starting treatment, and sometimes a blood test is done to check your liver function. Do not drink beer, wine, or liquor while on treatment.



What medication side effects should I look for?

*Like all medicines, the medicines used to cure LTBI can have side effects. Some people take TB medicines without any problems. **Call or see your doctor if you have any of these side effects:***

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| ▶ Nausea* or vomiting | ▶ Yellow eyes or skin | ▶ Coughing for more than 3 weeks |
| ▶ Stomach pain | ▶ Numbness or tingling in fingers or toes | ▶ Night sweats |
| ▶ Dark urine (tea or coffee colored) | ▶ Skin rash or itching | ▶ Difficulty breathing or wheezing |

*Some people have mild nausea when they begin taking pills. If this happens to you, try eating a small amount of food with your pill(s) or take it at bedtime. If you are still nauseated after three days, call your doctor.



What should I remember when taking medication for LTBI?

- ▶ It is very important to take your TB medication as prescribed by your doctor. If you miss too many days, the medicine might not work. If you miss any days, write them down so you can tell your doctor and nurse at your next check-up.
- ▶ Keep taking your medications until your doctor says it is ok to stop.
- ▶ Protect yourself, your family, and your friends from TB by taking all of your TB medicine.
- ▶ The only way to get rid of the TB germs is by taking TB medicines.

