



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Tuberculosis (TB): Treatment and your diet

Information for patients

TB Service: 0118 322 6882

This leaflet gives dietary advice for people diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB).

Balanced diet

It is important to have a healthy, balanced diet to help your body fight and recover from TB. This means eating a wide variety of foods and eating the right amount of food for your body's needs. If you are not sure what a balanced diet is you can ask the TB nurses for advice. There are some useful website details at the back of this leaflet.

Taking your medicines

TB medicines should be taken on an empty stomach. Take them at least 30 minutes before or 2 hours after a meal. This will help to make sure your body absorbs the medicine more easily. It is best if you swallow the tablets whole, with a glass of water.

It is important that you remember to take your tablets every day. Let your nurse or the doctor know if you forget to take them.

Poor appetite and weight loss

Loss of weight and poor appetite are common in patients with TB, and those on TB treatment. The following tips may not be suitable for some people – check with your TB nurse first.

- Eat small frequent meals.
- Eat foods that you enjoy.
- If you use supplements such as Complan or Ensure drinks, make sure these are used after meals and not instead of meals.
- Snack on high energy foods between meals, such as unsalted nuts, seeds and dried fruit; fruit smoothies and milkshakes; yoghurts and milky puddings.
- Include starchy foods in your meals – wholemeal pasta, brown rice, potatoes, beans or lentils.

- Enrich your food by adding grated cheese, cream, butter, milk powder and/or evaporated milk to soups, curries, vegetables or sauces.
- Add dried fruits, jam or honey to breakfast cereals or puddings

Foods that you may need to avoid

Foods that contain higher levels of histamine and tyramine (e.g. tuna fish, cheeses, red wine, fermented foods) can cause some people to have more side effects from their treatment such as headaches, sweating, flushing, palpitations and dizziness.

You may wish to avoid these foods if these side effects occur.

If you do not have these side effects, do not restrict your diet.

Let the nurse or doctor know if you are taking any other 'over the counter' medicines, herbal treatment or supplements.

Look after your liver

Remember that your liver is working harder than usual dealing with your treatment, so drinking alcohol may cause damage to your liver.

We recommend that you drink no alcohol while on TB medications so it is very important to let us know if you are a regular drinker so we can give you personalised advice.

If you experience signs of jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin), it is important that you let the TB nurses or your doctor know as soon as possible.

Vitamin D

This vitamin is essential for bone health and also to help your body fight TB. Most of our vitamin D comes from direct sunlight on our skin. The amount of time you need to spend in the sun is different for every person and the winter sunlight in this country is not strong enough to provide the vitamin D we need.

Some foods contain vitamin D, such as oily fish, eggs and meat.

It is added to some foods, such as margarine and low-fat spreads, breakfast cereals, soya products, powdered milk.

If you have complex medical and/or dietary needs you may be referred to the dietitian.

Useful websites

- www.thetruthabouttb.org
- www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/
- www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/

TB nursing team contact details:

Contact the TB team during working hours Monday to Friday on: 0118 322 6882 or email rbft.tb-service-refs@nhs.net.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Respiratory Medicine (West Berkshire TB Service), November 2025.
Next review due: November 2027.