



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Tuberculosis (TB): Latent tuberculosis and chemoprophylaxis

Information for patients

TB Service: 0118 322 6882

Information for people with latent tuberculosis (TB) that explains how chemoprophylaxis treatment works.

What is tuberculosis (TB)?

- TB is an infection caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*).
- TB can affect many different parts of the body, but most commonly affects the lungs and can be infectious.
- TB can be caught by breathing in droplets coughed by someone who already has TB.
- TB can be cured by taking treatment.

What is the difference between latent TB infection and TB disease?

- With latent TB the TB germs are in the body but are not active. The person is well and cannot pass the germs on to other people.
- With TB disease the TB germs are active in the body and the person is ill and may pass on the germs to others, if the disease is in the lungs or the throat.

Why does it need to be treated?

- Latent TB can develop into active TB disease in later life.
- Treating latent TB now will help to prevent this from occurring.

How does the doctor know I have latent TB disease?

- The doctor or nurse will know from reading the results of your skin tests, chest x-ray and/or blood tests.

How can I be sure I do not already have TB disease?

Because you do not have these symptoms typical of TB disease:

- Cough which lasts for weeks / coughing up blood.
- Fever, sweating, especially at night.

- Unexplained weight loss, fatigue (lack of energy).
- Persistent swollen glands.

Your treatment

- You will be looked after as an outpatient by a doctor and a nurse who specialise in TB.
- The medicine needs to be taken every day. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you forget and it is time for the next dose, miss out the one you forgot and do not take double the dose. **If this happens, please tell your nurse/doctor as soon as possible.**
- TB germs are killed very slowly. It takes at least three months for the medicine to kill all the germs. The length of the treatment depends on what medicines you are given. **You must continue to take your medicine until all the TB germs are dead, even though you have no symptoms of TB disease.**

Important advice

- These tablets may interfere with other medication you take, please check with your TB specialist nurse for advice.
- These tablets will affect the contraceptive pill, for further advice, please see your GP.
- It is advisable to avoid pregnancy whilst on TB medication.
- All medication must be taken together by mouth, once a day, on an empty stomach (30 minutes before food).
- Please avoid drinking alcohol.
- Make sure you don't run out of your medication, but if you do, get in contact with your TB specialist nurse as soon as possible.
- You must attend all your hospital appointments so that we can monitor your progress and supply you with more medication.
- Store medicines in a cool, dark place, out of the reach of children.
- Please contact us if you want to discuss any part of your treatment.
- Remember to contact us immediately if you have any side effects.
- If you don't get a follow up appointment, contact 0118 322 6882.

Your medication

These are just a few of the possible side effects. Please read the patient information leaflet for each medication for a complete list.

Rifinah – 300mg orange capsule / 150mg round, bright pink tablet. This tablet combines Rifampicin and Isoniazid. For side effects see Rifampicin, Isoniazid.



Rifampicin – 300mg red & pink capsule, 150mg red & blue/grey capsule, or plain red capsule. This will colour urine, tears and sperm orange (this is normal and nothing to worry about). Contact lenses may become discoloured so wearing spectacles is recommended until the treatment has ended. The contraceptive pill will not work effectively so you will need to consider an alternative, barrier method of contraception. Other side effects include skin rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea.



Isoniazid – 100mg round white tablet, 50mg small, round white tablet. Side effects may be nausea, vomiting and tingling in hands and feet. You may be given pyridoxine (vitamin B6) to prevent the tingling from happening. May affect the contraceptive pill.



Pyridoxine – 10mg round white tablets. Vitamin B6 supplement for prevention of tingling in feet and hands.



These medicines are processed in the body by the liver. Please contact the TB nurse if you develop abdominal pain, vomiting or become yellow (jaundiced).

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

Reviewed: December 2023. Next review due: December 2025.