

Taking Medication for Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)

You have a positive skin test. This means that you have TB germs sleeping inside your body. This is called latent TB infection (LTBI). You can take medication to prevent the sleeping TB germs from waking up and becoming active TB disease.

How did I get the TB germs?

At some point in your life, you spent lots of time with someone who had TB disease in their lungs. When they sneezed or coughed, the TB germs spread in the air, and you breathed them into your lungs. Your immune system is keeping the TB germs asleep right now.

What is the difference between TB infection and TB disease?



If your immune system is strong, it can wall off the TB germs and keep them asleep.

- You **do not feel sick**
- You cannot spread TB (non-contagious)
- TB germs are **asleep** inside your body
- Positive skin test
- Chest x-ray may be normal

If your immune system is weak, the TB germs may wake up and begin to grow.

- You **feel sick**
 - cough (more than 3 weeks)
 - fever
 - feel tired
 - loss of appetite
 - weight loss
 - night sweats
- You can spread TB (**contagious** - if lung TB)
- TB germs are **awake** and **growing inside** your body
- X-ray shows TB in your lungs or other parts of the body.

LTBI medication is free

There are several treatment options. Talk to your doctor or nurse to see which treatment for LTBI is best for you.

Taking LTBI medication

- Take your medication as prescribed to ensure the most effective treatment.
- Set an alarm or use a mobile app to help you remember to take your medication every day.
- TB medication works best on an empty stomach. If it upsets your stomach, you may take it with a little bit of food to prevent this.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking TB medication. Taking TB medication with alcohol could damage your liver.
- Only stop taking your medication if you experience any side effects (see list below) and are told to stop by a healthcare provider.

Possible medication side effects

Most people feel well, but LTBI medication can make some people feel sick.

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Fever
- Very dark urine
- Loss of appetite
- Skin rash or itchy skin
- A tingling feeling in fingers or toes (vitamin B6 is often taken with Isoniazid (INH) to prevent this)
- Or if you feel very tired or weak.

If your doctor is not available, seek medical attention right away.

Can I still get active TB disease after I take LTBI medication?

People who take the TB medication as prescribed almost never get sick with active TB disease.

Reasons to take LTBI medication

- Taking the LTBI medication prevents the sleeping TB germ from waking up and making you sick with TB disease.
- LTBI medication requires fewer pills than taking medication for TB disease.
- If you get sick with TB disease, you may not be able to participate in your daily activities, such as work and school, for a certain period of time.
- Protect yourself, your family, and friends.



**For more information, call Huron Perth Public Health
1-888-221-2133 ext 3284 or email IDteam@hpph.ca**