

Preventive treatment for tuberculosis infection

TB preventive treatment can stop infection from turning into active disease.

What is TB infection?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by bacteria and spreads through air and can infect anyone. Sometimes, a person gets infected with bacteria but they do not fall ill with TB immediately. In this case, the TB bacteria remain inactive in the body and the person is said to have TB infection. People with TB infection do not show any signs or symptoms of TB.

Most people with TB infection are not sick and cannot spread the infection to others. However, they are at risk of developing active TB if their immune system weakens.

Am I at risk?

You can be infected with TB bacteria even if you are not ill. In fact, as many as 1 in 4 people in the world are estimated to have TB infection, most of whom are well.

Some people who are infected will go on to develop TB disease.

The chance of getting active TB disease is higher if you:

- are in close contact with a TB patient
- are living with HIV

Other high-risk groups include people receiving dialysis, who have silicosis, who are receiving haematological transplantation or anti-TNF treatment, healthcare workers, migrants from high TB burden countries, people who use drugs, who are in prison or homeless people.

Do I need TB preventive treatment?

If you are at risk then your healthcare provider will first rule out active TB disease before assessing if you need TB preventive treatment.

A tuberculin skin test (TST) or interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA) can be used to identify people with infection.

What are the treatment options?

Today, there are many preventive treatment options available. New, shorter treatment options mean that people can be protected from TB for many years with treatment lasting only 1 or 3 months versus more than 6 months in the past.

It is important to complete the full course of TB preventive treatment so that it is effective.

Protect yourself and your loved ones!

