

Tuberculosis

Information for patients

If you have any issues, or you experience any unusual side effects from your medication contact your local TB nurse or the Infectious Diseases nurses.

Contact the Infectious Diseases nurses on: 01612915429

For more information on TB you can visit:

www.tbalert.org or

www.nhs.uk/conditions/tuberculosis

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What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an illness caused by airborne bacteria. The most common type of TB is pulmonary, affecting your lungs. However you can get TB in parts of the body other than the lungs; this is called extra-pulmonary TB. TB can be cured with a course of antibiotics. TB treatment usually lasts for a minimum of six months but this is sometimes extended due to the site of the infection, ongoing symptoms or if you are unable to take the recommended medication.

What are the symptoms of TB?

The most common symptoms of TB are:

- a cough that lasts for more than three weeks
- fevers and night sweats
- weight loss
- tiredness
- loss of appetite

If you have extra-pulmonary TB you may experience swelling or pain at the site of the infection.

How is TB diagnosed?

Pulmonary TB can sometimes be diagnosed by looking at a sputum sample under a microscope, or growing a culture of the sputum to see if the TB bug can be found. Doctors may also want you to have an X-ray to see whether there are any changes in the lungs that may indicate TB.

Extra-pulmonary TB can be diagnosed with a CT scan, ultrasound scan or a small biopsy, depending on the site of the infection.

Is TB contagious?

Pulmonary TB can be passed on to other people through coughing or sneezing, therefore it is important to remember to cough or sneeze into a tissue. After taking two weeks of TB treatment people are generally no longer infectious. Extra-pulmonary TB cannot be spread to other people.

After you are diagnosed with TB it is important to test people you live with, close friends and family members to see if they are at risk of developing TB. The TB nurses from your local area will be informed and will contact you to arrange screening. To test for TB, the nurses may use a skin test (a mantoux test) or a blood test (a quantiferon test).

What is the treatment for TB?

TB is usually treated with four drugs for the first two months of treatment, and then two drugs for a further four months. Sometimes the treatment may be given for longer, up to 18 months. If this is the case your doctor will inform you.

It's very important to take your medication as it has been prescribed and to finish the course.

If you are due to run out of tablets it is important you contact your local TB nurse for more before you run out.

Are there any side effects to TB drugs?

TB medication can cause side effects, such as:

- feeling sick or dizzy
- skin rashes
- pins and needles
- flu-like symptoms

In rare cases, people may experience jaundice (a yellowing of the skin or eyes), visual disturbances or a loss of appetite.

If this happens stop taking your TB medication immediately and seek medical advice.

Rifampicin may change your urine to an orange colour, but this is harmless. Rifampicin can also reduce the effectiveness of hormonal contraceptives. You will be given more information about this if needed.

You will be seen regularly in the TB clinic by a doctor or a specialist nurse.