



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

TB *infection*

Information about the treatment



Even if you are not ill, you could still be infected by tuberculosis (TB) bacteria. This is called a TB infection. Treating a TB infection can prevent TB at a later stage. This leaflet tells you more about the treatment.

What is a TB infection?

You have been screened for TB. This was a skin test or a blood test, or both. The result of the test was positive. That means that you have TB bacteria in your body. Your chest X-ray showed no abnormalities. The bacteria in your body are inactive. They are 'asleep'. You are not ill, you do not have TB and you are not infectious to others, but you do have a TB infection. The bacteria in your body cannot be transmitted to others, not even by sneezing, coughing, shaking hands or kissing.

A TB infection can become active at a later stage. And then you could become ill. About 10% of people with a TB infection later develop TB. Half of them develop the disease within two years after becoming infected. Is your health affected by other diseases, like HIV, or are you taking medication that weakens your immune system? If so, you will be more at risk of developing TB.

Medication to treat cancer, rheumatoid arthritis or skin diseases can weaken your immune system, so you should always tell your general practitioner or specialist if you have a TB infection.

Treating a TB infection

What does the treatment do?

Medication treatment will prevent you from getting ill at a later stage. The medicines kill the 'sleeping' TB bacteria. Your risk of developing TB then becomes very small.

What medication will I be given?

The doctor will tell you about the medication and how long you have to take it. The most commonly used medicines are isoniazid and rifampicin. They are often combined in a single tablet (Rifinah).



How often do I have to take my medication?

You should take your medication once a day. Take your medication at the same time every day, like in the morning or in the evening.



How long do I have to take my medication?

The treatment lasts for at least three months. This depends on which medication you are given. It is important that you keep taking the medication until the course is finished. The bacteria do not die quickly. That is why you have to take the medication for a long time.

If you do not take the medication properly, or often forget to take it, the treatment will not work. This means the bacteria will not die. It is important that you always take your medication at the same time every day until the whole course is finished.

What should I do if I forgot to take my medication?

Take it later the same day. If you do not notice until the next day, do not take a double dose. Do mention it to your doctor at your next appointment.



Can I eat as usual during the treatment?

Yes, you can eat whatever you like. Do not drink any alcohol during the treatment.

Together with the medication, alcohol can cause liver problems.



Can I take other medication as usual during the treatment?

Always tell the doctor treating you which other medicines you take. That includes any contraceptive you take (such as the pill). The medication can make the pill less effective. So you could get pregnant. If you do not want to get pregnant, you could use condoms, a contraceptive injection or an intra-uterine device.



Does the preventive treatment have any side effects?

The medicines can have side effects. Your urine, faeces, sweat or tears could turn reddish orange. At every check-up, the doctor and/or TB nurse will ask you about any side effects.

TB medication can sometimes have serious side effects.
Do you have any of the following?

- skin rash
- nausea
- stomach ache
- jaundice (the whites of your eyes are yellow)

Stop taking the medication and immediately contact your doctor or the nurse at the Municipal Public Health Service (GGD) TB department. You should also contact them if you are in any doubt or have any other symptoms.

If you cannot or do not want to take medication

If there is any reason (medical or otherwise) for you not to take medication, the doctor will discuss this with you. Every six months for the next two years, you will then have a chest X-ray. The doctor will assess the X-ray to see if you have developed TB. You will receive an invitation for the chest X-ray.

If you do not take medication, you will be at more risk of developing TB. The X-rays do not kill the bacteria.

What do we do with your data?

The GGD follows the rules of the law in handling your personal data that are stored in your medical file.

Any questions, tips, complaints or compliments?

- Please contact the TB department of the GGD in your region. You can find the contact details on www.ggd.nl and in the vaccination invitation. GGDs have a complaints procedure.
- For more information about TB, go to www.rivm.nl/tuberculose.

This information is available in English at:

Xogtaan oo Soomaali ah waxaa laga heli karaa:

Te informacje można znaleźć w języku polskim na stronie:

ብዛንቋ ትግርኛ ዝተተርጎሙ መልክዕ ናይቲ ናብሬታ፡ ኣብ'ዚ ዝስዕብ ገጽ ክርከብ ይከኣል፡-

هذه المعلومات متاحة باللغة العربية في هذا الموضوع:

این معلومات به زبان دری در اینجا قابل دسترس است:



www.rivm.nl/en/tuberculosis/information-materials

Published by:

**National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment, RIVM**

PO Box 1 | 3720 BA Bilthoven

The Netherlands

www.rivm.nl/en

September 2022

Committed to *health and sustainability*