

## TREATMENT OF LATENT TB INFECTION (LTBI)

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
<p>❖ <b><i>Why do I need to take medicine to treat TB when I am not sick?</i></b></p>	<p>The bacterium (germ) that causes TB can infect people and remain latent (quiet) for years without causing any signs of illness. In some people, often years after the infection occurred, these latent bacteria can become active and cause TB disease. TB disease can cause severe illness and even death. It is much easier to treat latent TB infection (LTBI) than active TB disease, and treatment of LTBI prevents the later development of TB disease.</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>My TB test is positive because I got BCG, so why do I need treatment?</i></b></p>	<p>BCG vaccination can cause a positive TB skin test (PPD) for a time after the BCG was given, but the positive test usually doesn't persist over time. Most positive PPD tests in people who have a risk factor for TB exposure are caused by TB infection. For this reason, treatment is recommended for people who have a positive PPD, even if they received BCG.</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>Why do I have to take the medicine for such a long time?</i></b></p>	<p>Most drugs that kill bacteria work best when the bacterium is actively growing. As described above, the TB bacterium is in a latent state, so it is very difficult to kill. Careful studies have shown that to be fully effective, isoniazid (INH), the main drug used to treat LTBI, has to be taken for nine months. Six months of treatment provides a good result, but is not quite as effective as nine months.</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>I've heard there is another medicine that can be taken for a shorter time. Is this true?</i></b></p>	<p>A combination of two drugs taken for two months was found to be effective in treating LTBI. When this treatment began to be widely used, however, several people experienced severe toxicity from this treatment, so it is no longer recommended. A four month course of rifampin also appears to be effective. It has not been as well-studied as INH, however, and it is not known if it is as effective as INH. Treatment with rifampin may be appropriate for some people who cannot take INH, but INH is the first choice treatment for most people.</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>Why do I have to come in to be checked every month?</i></b></p>	<p>There are two main reasons. The first is to make sure that you are not experiencing any serious side effects from the medicine. The second is to be sure you are taking the medicine regularly as prescribed. If the medicine is not taken regularly, it won't be effective in treating LTBI.</p>

## TREATMENT OF LATENT TB INFECTION (LTBI), cont.

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<p>❖ <b><i>How can I know if I am having side effects from the medicine?</i></b></p>	<p>People can have side effects from any medication, including INH. If you develop a new rash, or have nausea or vomiting that lasts more than a day, or if your urine becomes dark in color, you should contact your health care provider so you can be evaluated. If you have any other new symptoms, you should also contact your health care provider. If you are prescribed any new medications while taking INH, you should inform your health care provider that you are taking INH, so they can determine whether there are any potential interactions between INH and the other drugs that might cause problems.</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>Why do I have to limit the alcoholic beverages that I drink?</i></b></p>	<p>INH and alcohol can both affect the liver. It is OK to have an occasional alcoholic drink while taking INH, but heavy drinking should be avoided because this can increase the risk of significant liver inflammation (hepatitis).</p>
<p>❖ <b><i>Can I give TB to another person before I'm fully treated?</i></b></p>	<p>You have been evaluated to be sure that you don't have active TB disease, which is the only form that is infectious. You aren't contagious if you have latent TB infection, and won't infect anyone else.</p>