

Discharge Instructions for Tuberculosis (TB)



You have been diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB), a serious disease caused by a type of bacteria. It is spread from person to person through the air, mainly from people who have the infection in their lungs, or throat. TB most often affects the lungs. But it can cause disease in any part of the body. This includes the lymph nodes, spine, kidneys, and brain.

Not everyone with TB gets sick. There are two types of TB:

- **TB disease (infectious TB).** People with TB disease often feel sick and are infectious. This means they can spread TB bacteria to others, depending on where in the body the TB bacteria is.
- **Latent TB infection.** People with this TB have no symptoms, don't feel sick, and can't spread TB bacteria to others. Some people with latent TB, especially those with a weak immune system, can develop TB disease. But many people with latent TB never develop TB disease. But without treatment, latent TB can progress to TB disease.

Here's what you can do to take care of yourself and to prevent the spread of TB.

Prevent the spread of TB

If you have TB disease, TB bacteria are multiplying in your body. Your immune system can't stop the bacteria from growing. You can spread TB bacteria to others when you have TB disease in the lungs, or throat. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidneys or spine, aren't usually contagious. If your healthcare provider tells you that you have TB disease or that you have latent TB and are at risk for TB disease, you will be prescribed one or more medicines. You will need to take medicine for 4, 6, or 9 months depending on the regimen prescribed. This regimen will be based on different things linked to your health so your provider will tell you when you can stop taking the medicine.

If you have TB disease (infectious TB), follow these tips to prevent the spread of TB bacteria to others:

- Stay home. Don't go to work or to school until your healthcare provider says you can go back. Don't have close contact with anyone until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Make sure that your family, friends, and coworkers or classmates are tested.
- Keep your hands clean. Wash them if you use them to cover your mouth when you cough.
- When you cough or sneeze, take steps to prevent the spread of TB:
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue.
 - Put your used tissue in a closed bag and throw it away.
 - If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and clean, running water (warm or cold) for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Important care advice

- Take your medicine exactly as directed. Keep taking it even if you start to feel better. Not taking your medicine for the full course may lead you to get sick again. It also increases the chance of drug-resistant TB. Drug-resistant TB means that one or more of the typical medicines for TB don't work.
- Follow your healthcare provider's direction about when it's OK to be in close contact with others.

- If you are taking birth control pills, ask your healthcare provider if there are interactions with the TB medicine that could make the birth control less effective. Ask if you should use an additional backup method of birth control.
- Check with your healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter medicines.
- Limit your activity so you don't get too tired. Plan frequent rest periods.
- Keep your healthcare appointments. You will need to be checked regularly for several months to a year. This is to make sure you are not having side effects from the medicines. It also makes sure your TB is responding to treatment. If you miss an appointment, reschedule as soon as possible.
- You may be asked or required to have a healthcare worker watch you taking the TB medicines. This is called directly observed therapy (DOT). This may happen anywhere from 1 time per week to up to 3 to 6 times per week. If you are receiving DOT, go to every session. Another choice may be to use a cellphone, tablet, or other device so the healthcare worker watch you taking the medicines.

Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Blue lips or fingernails

Tell the paramedics you are being treated for TB.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Bloody material (sputum) that is coughed up from your lungs and into your mouth
- Night sweats that get worse or keep happening
- Increased coughing

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