

### **Do TB germs always make me feel sick?**

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. Your body builds a wall around the TB germs which keeps them from harming you. This is called **latent TB infection (LTBI)**.

The TB germs are not hurting you now. They are “asleep” but they are still alive. The TB germs will “sleep” as long as your body can fight them off. When you have LTBI you can’t spread TB to others.

If your body stops fighting off the TB germs, they will “wake up” and start to grow. **This can happen to anyone with LTBI at any time.** When the germs grow and spread it is called “active TB disease”. People with active TB disease can get very sick and can spread TB to other people.

### **How can I prevent active TB disease?**

There are medicines you can take to prevent you from getting active TB disease. Isoniazid (INH) is a common medicine used to treat LTBI. INH kills the “sleeping” TB germs **before** they have a chance to make you sick. Because the TB germs are strong, it takes many months for the medicine to kill them.

### **How often do I take the INH?**

INH works best if you take it every day at the same time until your health care provider says it is OK to stop. Take your INH without food, however, if you get an upset stomach take the INH with a small amount of food..

### **Why should I take medicine if I don’t feel sick?**

INH kills the TB germs in your body **before** they have a chance to “wake up” and make you sick. Remember, TB germs are easier to kill while they are still “asleep.”

### **What should I know about medicine for LTBI?**

Many people take INH every day without any problems, but **there are a few things you should watch for: If you have any of these problems, call your health care provider right away — don’t wait for your next appointment.**

- Fever for more than three days
- Poor appetite, losing weight, or feeling tired for no reason
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

Some people have mild nausea when they **begin** taking INH pills. If this happens to you, try eating a **small** amount of food with your pill or take it at bedtime. **If you are still nauseated after three days, call your health care provider right away.**

- Pain in your stomach or belly
- Dark urine (tea or coffee color)
- Yellow skin or eyes; change in vision
- Skin rash or itching
- Numbness or tingling feeling in your hands or feet or around your mouth
- Clumsiness or unsteadiness

### **Other important points:**

- **Drinking alcohol** while you take INH can hurt your liver. Don’t drink beer, wine, or liquor until you finish your LTBI treatment. Never stop taking your medicine without talking with your medical care provider.
- Be sure to tell your health care provider if you are taking any other medicine.
- If you get pregnant, stop your INH and contact your health care provider right away
- Keep this and all medicines stored away from children and pets.

### **What happens if I don’t take the medicine?**

If you don’t take INH or if you stop taking your pills too soon, you could become sick with active TB disease. This can happen to **anyone** with LTBI **at any time.** Don’t wait for this to happen to you and your family! Call your health care provider if you have any of the following things:

- A cough for 3 weeks or more
- Night sweats
- Coughing up blood
- Fever

### **What should I do if I’ve had a BCG vaccine?**

In countries where TB is common, many people have a vaccine called BCG. BCG can protect children from TB, but it lasts only a few years.

People who had BCG can get active TB disease! If you’ve had BCG, you can still protect yourself by taking medicine for LTBI.

### **What if I can’t afford to pay for the pills?**

Ask your doctor or nurse about getting TB medicine at no cost to you from the Maine Public Health, TB Control Program.

### **What if I move away?**

If you move to another state or city, tell your health care provider **before you move.** They can help make sure that you get your TB medicine after you move.

**Protect yourself, your family, and your friends from TB. Take all of your TB medicine!**

## How can I remember to take my TB medicine?

**It is very important to take your INH regularly.** If you miss too many days the medicine might not work. Keep taking it until your doctor says it is OK to stop.

Some ways to help you remember:

- Keep your pills in a place where you will see them every day.
- Ask a family member or friend to remind you every day.
- Mark your calendar every day after you take your pill.
- Use a pill reminder box.
- Take your pill at the same time every day. For example, after you brush your teeth, eat breakfast, or just before you go to sleep.

If you miss any days, write them down so that you can tell your health care provider or nurse at your next check-up.

**Your Public Health Nurse:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

### Latent TB Infection

You feel well  
You can't spread TB to others  
Pills keep you from getting sick

### Active TB Infection

You may feel well  
You may be able to spread TB to others  
Pills make you better

### Who do I call if I need help?

**Maine Tuberculosis Control Program  
Telephone: 207-287-8157**

**Maine Public Health Nursing Program  
286 Water Street, 7th Floor  
State House Station #11  
Augusta, ME 04333-0011  
Voice 287-3259 or 1-800-698-3624  
TTY 1-800-606-0215  
Toll Free number for Calls within Maine Only**

Appreciation is extended to the Minnesota Department of Health for granting us permission to use their text and graphic in the development of this pamphlet.

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John E. Baldacci, Governor Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

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# TREATMENT FOR LATENT TB\* INFECTION



**Can be prevented  
Can be treated  
Can be cured**

**TB**

**\*Tuberculosis is also called TB**