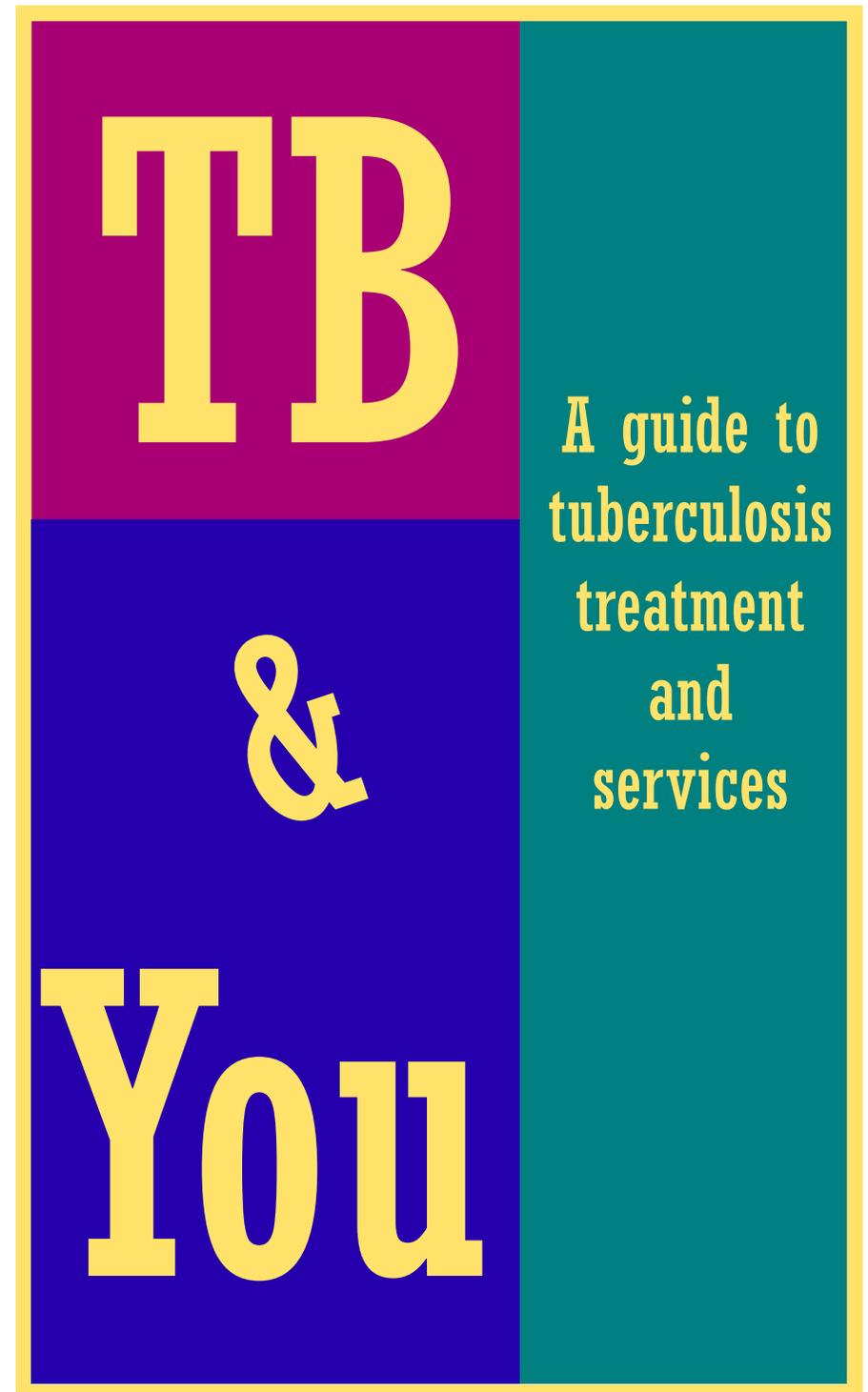


Adapted from TB and You: A Guide to Tuberculosis Treatment and Services with permission from Division of Public Health · TB Control Program State of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services



Human Services

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About tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that can harm the lungs or other parts of the body like the brain, kidneys, or spine. There are drugs you can take to treat TB. TB can kill you if it is not treated.

Doctors must tell their local health department about people who have TB because it is such a serious disease and it spreads from person to person. North Carolina law states that the health department must follow up with people who have TB to help make sure they get treated and keep TB from spreading.

How TB spreads

TB spreads through the air when someone who is sick with TB disease of the lungs coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks. Others can become infected by breathing the germs into their lungs.

To get infected with TB you have to spend a lot of time in closed spaces with a person who is sick with TB disease. People likely to get infected are often family members, roommates, friends or close co-workers.

TB does NOT spread by shaking hands, kissing, sex, sharing glasses, plates, utensils, clothing, sheets or furniture.

TB cannot spread through the air outside.

Drug Record

Name _____ MR# _____

Daily for 8 weeks

- Isoniazid _____mg
 - Rifampin _____mg
 - Pyrazinamide _____mg
 - Ethambutol _____mg
- Date Started: _____
- Date Stopped: _____
- Vitamin B₆ _____mg

followed by:

3 times a week for 18 weeks

- Isoniazid _____mg
 - Rifampin _____mg
- Date Started: _____
- Date Stopped: _____
- Vitamin B₆ _____mg

Bring this with you to all of your medical appointments.

Keep Yourself Healthy

Staying healthy helps your body fight diseases, even TB. Do these things to help you stay healthy:

- Eat healthy foods
- Get plenty of rest
- Move more (get plenty of exercise)
- **Don't drink alcohol** (beer, wine, or liquor)
- Don't use illegal (street) drugs
- Wash your hands often
- Stop smoking or using other tobacco products
- Lose weight if you need to
- Protect your skin from the sun
- Have safer sex (use condoms!)
- Get your shots when you need them
- Take medicine the way your doctors says to
- Go to the doctor for check ups (including blood pressure, cholesterol, urine, blood sugar levels, STD/HIV tests, Pap smears, breast exams, prostate exams and other screening tests)



Eating healthy food is one way to stay healthy.



TB is spread through the air when someone who is sick with TB disease coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks.

Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)

Most people infected with TB do not get sick. Their bodies can fight the TB germs. When this happens we call it latent tuberculosis infection or LTBI. People with LTBI do not feel sick and do not have symptoms of TB. They cannot spread TB to others.

TB Disease

A person can have LTBI for weeks, months, or years without feeling sick while their body fights the TB germs. If the body can no longer fight the TB germs, they get TB disease. People with TB disease feel sick and can spread TB to others.

How to find out if you have TB

A doctor looks at your medical history and some tests to find out if you have TB disease. The tests are:

- the TB skin test or a TB blood test
- chest x-rays and
- lab tests



A nurse gives a TB skin test. The skin test shows if there are TB germs in the body.



Wear a mask if you must be around other people while you are on home isolation.

How long will I need to be on home isolation?

Home isolation is different for each person. Home isolation may last days, weeks, or months. Taking every dose of your TB drugs can help shorten the time you will have to stay home. That is why taking your TB drugs is so important! Your TB doctor or nurse will tell you when it is safe to go back to your normal routine.

What if I need to go somewhere?

You must stay at home unless you need medical care. You should put off all appointments (like the dentist, the hairdresser, etc.) until you can no longer spread TB.

If you must go to the doctor, wear a mask and tell the doctor's office staff you have TB. If you have to ride in an ambulance, tell them you have TB.



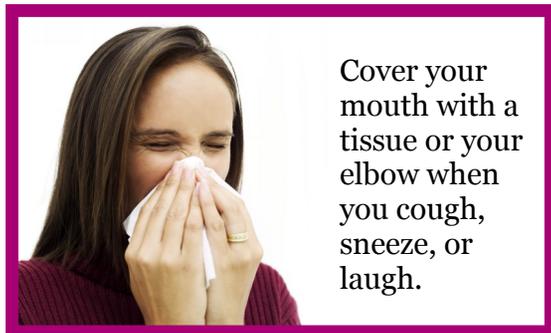
A doctor and nurse look at a chest x-ray to see if there are signs of TB disease.

Home isolation

Your doctor may put you on “home isolation”. This happens when you are not sick enough to need hospital care but you are still able to spread TB to other people. Home isolation means you need to stay home and away from other people to help stop the spread of TB.

What do I have to do while on home isolation?

- You must not have people over. Stay away from people who do not live with you. Babies, young children, and people with weak immune systems (cancer patients, people with HIV, people who have had an organ transplant) can catch TB easily.
- **You may be outside without a mask.** TB cannot spread through the air outside.
- You may **not** ride in taxis, buses, trains, or airplanes.
- You may **not** go to school, work, church, the store, or any other public place.
- You should air out the rooms you are staying in by opening the window (if the weather allows). You can also put a fan in the open window backwards so that the air is blown outside.
- **You must wear a mask if you are around other people.**
- As you always do, cover your mouth with a tissue or your elbow when you cough, sneeze, or laugh. Throw the tissue in the trash.



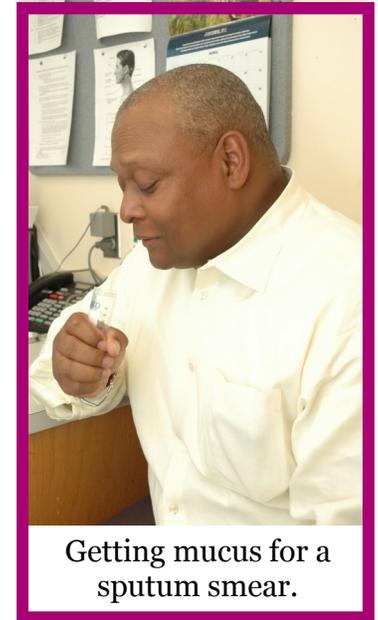
Cover your mouth with a tissue or your elbow when you cough, sneeze, or laugh.

About your lab tests

Sputum smears

These tests are done on mucus coughed up from the lungs (sputum). If there are germs that look like TB in the mucus, we can see them with a microscope. Sometimes we cannot see the TB germs with a microscope but you could still have TB.

That is why we also do a **sputum culture**. If the germs that grow on the culture are TB, you have TB disease. It can take up to two months for TB to grow on a sputum culture.



Getting mucus for a sputum smear.

Drug sensitivities

Tests are also done to make sure the drugs used to treat TB will kill your TB germs. It takes two more weeks to get the results of the drug sensitivities. This is why TB treatment is often started **BEFORE** getting the lab results.

HIV testing (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

HIV weakens the body making it hard to fight disease. Being infected with HIV can change the way TB is treated. That is why everyone who has TB must be tested for HIV.

HIV spreads by touching infected blood or body fluids. This could happen by having sex, sharing needles and from a mother to her child during birth or breastfeeding. A person can be infected with HIV for a long time and not know it.

How TB is treated

TB can be cured with the right treatment. The drugs most often used to treat TB are:

- Isoniazid (INH)
- Rifampin (RIF)
- Ethambutol (EMB)
- Pyrazinamide (PZA)

All four of these drugs are given while waiting for the results of the sputum cultures and drug sensitivities. You may only need three of the drugs when we get the results of your drug sensitivities. After 8 weeks, you may only need two of these drugs.



How long treatment takes

It takes a long time to kill TB germs. You may have to take TB drugs for 6 months or more. You will likely feel much better before you finish the drugs. Even when you feel better, you must keep taking your drugs as long as the doctor tells you. If you miss any of your medicine or stop taking it too soon:

- You may get sick again
- You may infect others
- It may be harder to treat your TB because the drugs won't be able to kill your TB germs anymore.

Help others stay healthy

You may have been sick with TB disease for a while before you found out. Other people may have gotten TB from you when you didn't know you were sick. You will need to tell your TB nurse the names, addresses and phone numbers of people you spend time with like family members, roommates, friends, close co-workers, etc. It is our job to tell people who could have gotten TB from you that they need to be tested for TB. We will not tell them your name, only that they were around someone with TB and need to be tested. We will make sure they get free testing and treatment for TB they need it.



Help keep your friends and family healthy

You can spread TB until you have taken enough drugs to control your TB germs. How long this takes is different for each person. Sputum smears tell the TB doctor if you can still spread TB. The TB nurse will collect 2–3 sputum samples every 1–2 weeks to see how your drugs are working. The time it takes your sputum samples to change from positive to negative helps the doctor decide how long you will have to take your TB drugs.

TB drugs and problems

Most people can take TB drugs with no problems.
Sometimes the drugs used to treat TB can cause problems.

Problems you SHOULD worry about

Call the TB nurse right away if any of these things happen:

- You never feel hungry
- You always feel tired or weak
- You have nausea, vomiting, bloating or stomach pain for no reason
- Your skin or eyes turn yellow
- You have urine (pee) the color of tea or cola
- You have a fever
- Your stomach hurts
- Your fingers or toes tingle (like pins and needles)
- You get a rash or your skin itches
- You bleed or bruise for no reason
- Your joints ache
- You feel dizzy or confused
- Your mouth has no feeling (numb)
- Your vision gets blurry or changes
- Anything else that is not right

If you have any of these symptoms at night or on weekends, call your doctor or go to the emergency room. Take a list of all your drugs or the actual drugs with you.

Phone numbers you need to know

TB Nurse _____

TB Doctor _____

About your TB drugs

Your TB drugs are free at the health department.

Your TB drugs:

- You will take your drugs daily for at least 8 weeks.
- After that, your drugs **may** be changed to 3 times a week.
- You come to our clinic to take your drugs or sometimes the nurse can meet you at a place you choose (for example work, school, or home).
- The TB nurse will make sure you are getting the best treatment for you.
- We will answer all of your questions.

Directly Observed Therapy (DOT)

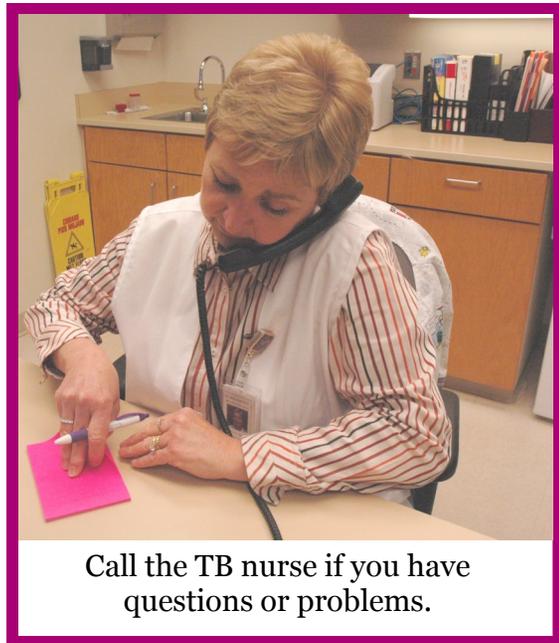
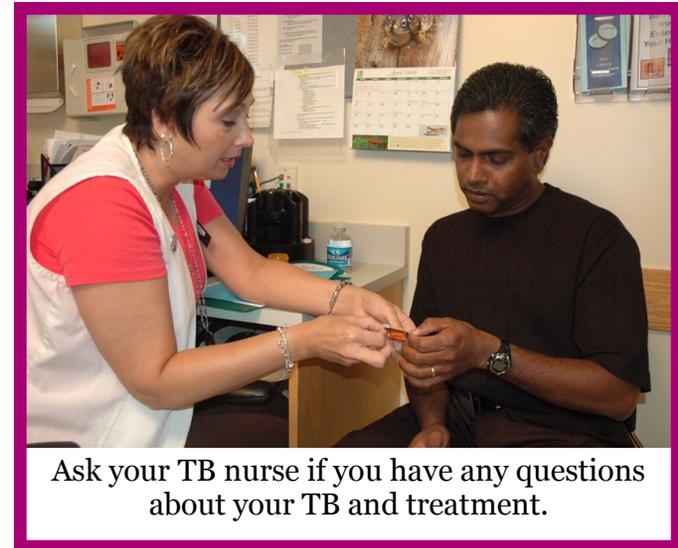
It is not easy to keep taking drugs once you start feeling better. A nurse from the health department will help make sure you take all the drugs you need by watching you take them. This is called Directly Observed Therapy. North Carolina law says that people with TB must be watched while taking their TB drugs. This helps you take your TB drugs the right way and for the right amount of time.

Sometimes the nurse can meet you outside our clinic to give you your medicine.



More about your TB drugs

- Rifampin may make urine (pee), tears, stool (poop), and sweat turn orange. It may cause staining of soft contact lenses.
- Rifampin and pyrazinamide may make skin more likely to burn. Use sunscreen or clothes that cover skin so you won't get sunburned.
- Women should not get pregnant while taking their TB drugs. Birth control methods with hormones (pills, patches, rings, implants, shots, etc.) don't work as well with rifampin. Use an extra method of birth control (condoms) so you will not get pregnant.
- Taking rifampin while taking methadone can cause withdrawal symptoms. Talk with the doctor who put you on methadone about this.



TB drugs and other drugs you may be taking

Some drugs can affect or be affected by your TB medicine. Bring a list of all your drugs (vitamins, herbs, prescriptions, and drugs you can buy without a prescription) when you go to any healthcare worker. Tell the TB nurse or doctor before taking any new drugs.

TB drugs and alcohol

Keep your liver healthy—never drink wine, beer or other liquor while you are taking TB drugs. Drinking alcohol while taking TB drugs can harm your liver.