

# Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)

## What is Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)?

- Tuberculosis (TB) bacteria can live in the body without making you sick. This is called Latent Tuberculosis Infection.
- The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs coughs, sneezes, speaks or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.
- Your body's immune system stops the germs from growing by building a wall around the germs. The germs are "inactive" or "sleeping" when this happens, and you will not be sick or have any symptoms. The TB germs can stay asleep for a long time, sometimes for life.
- It is not contagious and you cannot spread it to your family, friends, or community.  
If you have LTBI there is a risk that you can develop active TB. If this happens you would develop symptoms and would be able to spread TB germs to others.

## What is active Tuberculosis (TB)?

- TB bacteria become active if the immune system can't stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active (multiplying in your body), this is called TB disease. People with TB disease are sick and may spread TB germs to family, friends, or community.

## Who is at increased risk to develop active TB?

- People who got TB infection in the last 2 to 3 years
- People with lung scars that show on an x-ray
- People who are HIV positive
- People who are alcoholics or injection drug users
- People with diabetes or certain types of cancers
- People who are very thin or don't eat well
- People taking certain medications (steroids, auto-immune disorder medication)

## What are the signs and symptoms of active TB?

- Coughing for longer than 2-3 weeks/ coughing up phlegm/ coughing up blood
- Fever/chills/night sweats
- Weakness/tired
- Unexplained weight loss/loss of appetite

- Problems in the part of your body with the disease if it is not in your lungs (i.e. kidney, spine)
- If you start to have any of these symptoms you must inform your Health Care Provider immediately.

## What are the tests for LTBI and TB?

- Tuberculin skin test (TST) can be done to see if you have LTBI. If it is positive, it probably means that you have TB infection.
- Physical exam by your Health Care Provider (HCP)
- Chest x-ray
- 3 Sputum samples may be collected to see if the TB germs are growing in your lungs.

## What is the treatment for LTBI?

- Your HCP may recommend medication to kill the germs and prevent active TB disease. The Health Unit will provide the medicine for free when you bring in your prescription. It takes approximately 9-12 months to kill the TB germs. It is important to take all of the medicine. If you stop taking it too soon you will not kill all of the TB germs and they may become stronger.

If you have any questions or concerns call the Communicable Disease Control program at (705) 474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808 x2229.

## References:

Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) of the Canadian Lung Association (CLA); Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). (2013). *Canadian Tuberculosis Standards*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012). Basic TB facts. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/>

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