Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Tuberculosis (TB) Treatment

Version number: **4**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Tuberculosis (TB) Treatment

Patient Information

Tuberculosis (TB) Service

- Author ID: NB
- Leaflet Ref: CM 169
- Version: 4
- Date Produced: July 2026
- Expiry Date: July 2028

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is a bacteria that mostly affects the lungs, but it can also affect any part of the body, such as the:

- Brain
- Lymph glands
- Spine
- Kidneys

How is it caught?

When someone with TB in their lung's coughs, the bugs become airborne therefore other people can breathe them in. The people most likely at risk of TB are those who live in the same house as the person with TB disease.

Am I infectious?

Not all people with TB are infectious.

You are only infectious to other people if you have TB in your lungs or throat and you are coughing up TB bugs. If you have TB anywhere else in your body, you will not be infectious.

Most people will not be infectious after two weeks of taking the antibiotics as prescribed.

How is TB treated?

TB is treated with a combination of antibiotics for at least six months.

The length of treatment depends on whether the TB bugs are resistant to any of the antibiotics and where the TB is in your body.

The treatment may be prolonged if you do not take your tablets as prescribed by your doctor.

What is the standard treatment for TB?

Your doctor will give you four different antibiotics for two months. They are:

Rifampicin, Isoniazid, Pyrazinamide and Ethambutol.

Isoniazid, Rifampicin and Pyrazinamide may be combined as Rifater or all four may be given in a combined tablet known as Voractiv.

After two months, the antibiotics are usually reduced to Rifampicin and Isoniazid. Rifampicin and Isoniazid may be combined in a tablet called Rifinah.

You will also be given a vitamin tablet called Pyridoxine which will help to prevent any side effects from the Isoniazid such as pins and needles to the hands and feet.

Does TB medication have any side effects?

As with all medicines there may be some side effects which may include nausea (feeling sick) dizzy, skin rashes and pins and needles. Others may be more serious such as eye damage, nerve damage and jaundice (yellowing of skin or eyes).

Information about the different tablets and their side effects can be obtained from the TB nurse. It is always advisable to read the leaflets that accompany your medication before you take them.

Minor problems should be reported to your TB nurse or GP but if you experience any major side effects, you should attend your nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

The antibiotics for Tuberculosis can be taken safely during pregnancy. Your doctor or nurse will arrange some tests and investigations before you start your treatment.

How often should I take my medication?

The medication needs to be taken once a day, first thing in the morning on an empty stomach to aid absorption. Leave it 30 minutes before you eat anything.

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you can. If it is time for the next dose, take it

but do not take a double dose. Please tell your nurse or doctor if this happens.

Why do I need to take my TB medication regularly?

TB bugs are killed very slowly. It takes at least 6 months for the antibiotics to kill all the TB bugs.

You must continue to take your medication until the doctor stops your treatment.

Stopping your treatment too soon or not taking the antibiotics as prescribed is unsafe. You may become resistant to the antibiotics and develop a type of TB that is difficult and sometimes impossible to treat.

It is therefore **very important** that you do not miss any doses of your treatment.

What about other medicines I am taking?

It is very important to tell your doctor if you are taking any other medications. There are several medications that can interact with your TB antibiotics causing them not to work or to have a reduced efficacy

Is there anything I should avoid eating or drinking?

Some foods such as cheese and tuna contain ingredients that can interact with your TB medications so these should be reduced.

You should also avoid drinking excessive alcohol to help protect your liver.

How can I remember to take my medicine?

- You will be taking your TB antibiotics for at least 6 months so it is important that you get into a routine.
- Here are some ways to help you take your medicines regularly:
- Take your tablets at the same time every day and leave them in the same place.
- Take your tablets to bed with you at night so that you can take them as soon as you wake up in the morning.
- Put your tablets in a weekly dispenser.
- Mark off each day on a calendar as you take your medication.
- Try setting an alarm to remind you to take your tablets.
- Ask a family member or friend to remind you to take your medicine. If you still forget, your TB nurse will be able to arrange someone to observe you taking your tablets.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you miss any doses of medication as they will try to help you.

Will I be monitored throughout my treatment?

Your TB nurse will provide you with their contact details.

You will receive a monthly clinic appointment where you will be monitored and supported by the doctor and nurse.

More information about TB

If you have TB and would like to know more about it from someone who has had the disease, there is a registered charity for TB called TB Alert.

Their website contains lots of information about TB and support for people with the disease from people who have experienced the disease themselves.

They can be found on www.tbalert.org

Useful information

Please contact your TB nurse if you would like further information.

Telephone number: **0300 707 1170**

The TB service is available Monday to Friday, 08:30 until 16:30.

An answering service is in operation outside of these hours and on Bank Holidays.

Specialist Nurse for Tuberculosis

TB Service

Long Term Conditions

Entrance B, Boston House

Wigan Health Centre

Wigan

WN6 7LB



Version number: **4**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

All rights reserved © 2026
WWL Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust