

Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)

What You Need to Know

WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by germs that are spread from person to person through respiratory droplets in the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the eyes, heart or the bones. People near a person with TB in their lungs may breathe in the bacteria and become infected. If not treated properly, active TB disease can cause death.

WHAT IS LATENT TB INFECTION (LTBI)?

People with latent TB Infection (LTBI) have TB germs in their bodies, but they do not have symptoms because the germs are not active. At this stage, an infected person does not spread the germs to others; however, they may develop TB disease in the future. Taking prescribed medications will help prevent them from developing TB disease. People with LTBI usually have a positive skin test reaction or positive TB blood test.

IF I HAVE LTBI, WHAT CONDITIONS INCREASE MY RISK FOR DEVELOPING ACTIVE TB DISEASE?

Most people with LTBI never develop TB disease; however, about 10% of people with TB infection go on to develop active TB disease. People with certain medical conditions (including diabetes, HIV, and weakened immune systems) have a higher risk of developing TB disease.

Other conditions which increase the risk of developing active TB include:

- head and neck cancers
- leukemia or Hodgkin's disease
- severe kidney disease
- low body weight
- certain medical treatments that affect the immune system, such as prescription medications for rheumatoid arthritis

HOW CAN OAKLAND COUNTY HEALTH DIVISION (OCHD) HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND MY RISKS OF DEVELOPING ACTIVE TB DISEASE?

As part of your initial evaluation for LTBI, a nurse from the healthcare team will review your medical history including any medications that you take. In addition, testing for diabetes and HIV will be done, unless you have already been diagnosed with either condition.

WHAT ADDITIONAL TESTS CAN I EXPECT?

In addition to testing for diabetes and HIV, you may have testing for hepatitis B and hepatitis C virus infection. It is important to know if you have hepatitis B or C infection because this can affect treatment for both LTBI and TB disease. A member of the healthcare team will review your medical history to determine your need for hepatitis B or hepatitis C testing.

I HAVE RECENTLY BEEN FOUND TO HAVE LTBI. WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Your nurse at OCHD will assist you in understanding all the steps needed to keep you healthy, by reviewing your medical history and providing recommended tests so you can have the best understanding of your risks. Taking treatment for LTBI will almost eliminate your risk of developing active TB.

Rev. 3/4/2022

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