

Latent tuberculosis, patient information (19/09/2016)

When preventive treatment is given.

Information leaflet issued by the County Medical Officer for Communicable Disease Control.

How does one become infected?

Tubercular bacteria are spread through the air from one person to another. This can occur when the person who is ill and infected coughs and others in the vicinity inhale the bacteria.

What is latent tuberculosis?

Not everyone who is infected becomes ill with tuberculosis. In the case of most people, the body's immune system inhibits the growth of the bacteria. The bacteria may remain in the body, but they are not active. This condition is called **latent tuberculosis**.

Latent tuberculosis is not a disease

If you have taken a blood test (IGRA test) or skin test (tuberculin test) and have been informed that you have latent tuberculosis, you are **completely healthy** and cannot spread the bacteria to others. There is the risk you will develop tubercular disease later in life, but the risk is small. In most cases, therefore, treatment does not need to be given to those who have latent tuberculosis.

Preventive treatment is provided in some cases

Some people with an increased risk of becoming ill later in life are offered preventive treatment. This applies in the first instance to children and adolescents, to women in connection with pregnancy and after delivery, and to people with a weakened immune system as a result of treatment for illnesses such as cancer, insulin-treated diabetes, and serious kidney disease. Preventive treatment is sometimes also given to those who have recently been exposed to a tubercular infection.

You are recommended to have preventive treatment.

Because you have latent tuberculosis and belong to one of the above-mentioned groups, you are recommended to have treatment as prevention. This is in order to reduce the risk of you becoming ill with tuberculosis in the future.