

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

When no 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 infectious 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 you have been informed that you have latent tuberculosis, you are **completely healthy** and cannot spread the bacteria to others. There is a risk you will develop tubercular disease later in life, but the risk is small. In most cases, therefore, no treatment is needed for those who have latent tuberculosis.

Preventive treatment is provided in some cases

Some people who have 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 tubercular infection.

Contact with a doctor

If in the future you suffer from prolonged coughing (more than three weeks), night sweats, a high temperature, or unintentional weight loss, please contact your doctor for an examination for tuberculosis. You should also contact a doctor if you become pregnant or suffer from insulin-treated diabetes or a serious kidney disease, or if you are receiving cancer treatment or have a weakened immune system for some other reason. In such cases you will run an increased risk of becoming ill with tuberculosis.