

GETTING TO KNOW...

HIV and TUBERCULOSIS



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection caused by a kind of bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It usually attacks the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack other parts of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

Not everyone who becomes infected with TB bacteria falls sick; the bacteria lives inside the body, but it is able to keep the bacteria from growing. This kind of infection is known as **latent TB**.

A person with latent TB will test positive for the bacteria, but does not show symptoms, doesn't feel sick, and cannot spread the bacteria to other people.

But in some people, especially those with a weak immune system, TB bacteria can become active and cause **TB disease**. Symptoms of active TB disease include:

- A persistent or chronic cough, or coughing up blood or phlegm;
- Chest pains;
- Weakness or fatigue;
- Weight loss or lack of appetite;
- Chills, fever, or night sweats.

TB bacteria are spread through air, when a person with active TB disease of the lungs coughs, speaks or sings. People around them may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

WHAT IF I HAVE HIV?

TB is a serious threat for people living with HIV for the following reasons:

- HIV positive people are more likely to be infected with TB.
- A HIV positive person with untreated latent TB infection is at a higher risk of developing active TB disease.
- HIV infection and active TB disease is a symptom of AIDS. Without immediate treatment, it may be fatal.

Fortunately, people living with HIV can be effectively treated for TB. The first step would be to confirm TB infection through tests. If you test positive, further tests will be done to ensure that you don't have active TB disease. Then you will begin treatment for latent TB or active TB disease depending on your test results.

Being on highly-active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) is important in bringing your immune system back to a healthy state. A strong, functioning immune system reduces the risk of being infected with TB bacteria. Testing for TB infection or disease should be a standard part of your care.

During the initial stages of HAART treatment, your doctor may suggest that you go on **isoniazid preventive therapy (IPT)**. Isoniazid is an antibiotic used for treating TB infection and disease, but is also taken by people who do not have TB as a way to protect themselves from being infected. A course of IPT is taken for 6 to 9 months.

If you have any concerns about TB infection or disease, it's best to discuss them with your doctor or healthcare provider – they will be able to determine the action that's best for your situation.

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