

Information about the medical treatment of dormant (latent) tuberculosis infection

You have been diagnosed with a dormant tuberculosis infection. The doctor in charge of your treatment has suggested a medical treatment for you. The treatment is aimed at eliminating the dormant tuberculosis bacteria in your body in order to prevent you from falling ill. The medical treatment is only given if you are willing and commit to treatment. Pursuant to the Act on Social and Health Care Client Fees, the treatment is free of charge for you.

Dormant tuberculosis infection is treated with a combination of 1 or 2 anti-tuberculosis medicines

- Isoniazid (Tubilysin®) 300mg tablet
- Rifampicin (Rimapen®) 600mg tablet
- Rifapentine (Priftin®) 150mg tablet

The length of the treatment period depends on the combination of medicines. In most cases, the course of treatment is between 3 and 9 months. The medicines are prescribed from the hospital outpatient clinic either to a pharmacy agreed upon or with a hospital pharmacy prescription.

Simultaneous use of other medicines and naturopathic remedies must be acknowledged because of eventual harmful interactions. This is why it is important for you to tell your doctor about all of your medicines.

Adverse effects may appear

Most adverse effects are mild and will pass even though medication is continued or can be alleviated with a number of means.

Rifampicin and rifapentine

- The urine, the saliva, the perspiration, and the tears turn orange. This is not harmful but contact lenses may not be used due to colouring.
- The effect of contraceptive pills is weakened so other means of contraception are also to be used during the treatment.
- Rifampicin may cause occasional reddening and itching of the face or scalp 2 or 3 hours after intake. The symptom can be treated with antihistamine preparations.

Isoniazid

- May cause mild peripheral nerve damage in the form of numbing, aches, or stinging in hands and feet. This is prevented with vitamin B6 supplement.
- May cause reddening in the face and headaches and fainting in rarer cases. This is due to the tyramine and histamine content in certain nutrients. Avoid ripened cheeses, red wine, tuna, and salami-type sausages.
- Acne may worsen. This can be treated with atypical acne regimen.
- More loss of hair may occur than usual. This will subside after the end of the treatment.

Anti-tuberculosis medicines may cause hepatitis which is why liver function is monitored with blood tests on a regular basis during the treatment.

- Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, or stomach aches. The skin and the white of the eyes may turn yellow. A hepatitis may also be symptomless and show up in blood tests.
- Use of alcohol increases the risk of hepatitis development. Avoid using alcohol during the treatment.

In case of mild symptoms, contact the doctor in charge of your treatment to have your situation assessed:

- Itchy rash, urticaria
- Nausea, diarrhoea, and lack of appetite
- Numbing, ache, or stinging in hands and feet (see to your intake of vitamin B6)
- Sleep disturbances, depression, concentration problems, vertigo.

Serious symptoms causing the treatment to be stopped. Immediately contact the doctor in charge of your treatment or get to an emergency ward:

- Vomiting and/or intense stomach pains
- The white of eyes or the skin turns yellow
- Fever and rash
- Less urine than usual, the colour of urine turns very dark
- Impairment of sight
- Convulsions
- Optical or auditory hallucination
- Suicidal thoughts, intense mood swings
- Out-of-the-ordinary bleeding from gums or nose.

What more do I need to know?

Medical treatment can prevent the development of tuberculosis disease in the majority of those who have completed the treatment. Continue to pay attention to your health. Contact a doctor in case of prolonged cough, sputum, phlegm, loss of appetite, loss of weight, intense fatigue, or night sweats.

Read more about tuberculosis on www.tuberkuloosi.fi.