



## What is Directly Observed Therapy (DOT)?

DOT is a partnership between you and your health care provider. Your provider will make sure you take all of your TB medicine so you can finish your treatment the right way. When you're on DOT, a trained health worker from the Department of Public Health gives you the medicine at a time and place that you both agree on. This may be your home, clinic, place of work, or another place in the community.

The Department of Public Health will give all TB medicines and do all evaluations. Its doctors and nurses, who are experts in treating TB, will work with you to manage your care.

## What role does the Department of Public Health play?

The Department is concerned about the health of you, your family, and people who spend a lot of time with you. We're responsible for making sure you get the right medical care for your TB and for preventing the spread of TB to others.

To prevent the spread of TB to your family, friends and others that you have spent a lot of time with, your doctor may recommend that they get a TB skin test (TST) or blood test called Interferon gamma release assay (IGRA). If they have a positive reaction to the skin test or blood test, their doctor will probably order a chest X-ray to see if they have active TB disease. If they have a negative reaction to the skin or blood test, they should be tested again two to three months after last contact. If a blood test is done, you don't have to come back for your results. Your doctor will contact you with your results.

**For more information visit:**  
[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb)

# Active TB Disease

---

## Take control of your health



## What is active TB disease?

Tuberculosis (TB) disease is said to be “active” when TB germs are alive and “awake” in your body. If you have active TB disease, you may have symptoms like a bad cough, night sweats, fatigue, and weight loss. You can spread TB germs to other people. TB mainly affects the lungs, however, it can also affect other parts of the body. If left untreated, TB can lead to death.

## How does someone get TB disease?

TB germs are spread in the air when someone who is sick with active TB disease coughs, sneezes, laughs, speaks, or sings. If you breathe in air that has TB germs, you may get infected. This means you will have TB germs in your body, but they are asleep. Yet, if your immune system weakens, these TB germs may “wake up” and make more germs. You may then get sick with active TB disease.

Anyone can get active TB disease. But you are more likely to get it if you have TB infection and are: a substance abuser, very young or elderly, or have a medical condition that weakens your immune system, like HIV, diabetes or cancer. You can't catch TB from clothes, dishes, food, or bedding.

## Signs & Symptoms of Active TB disease

---

- Bad cough for three weeks or more
- Coughing up blood
- Feeling very tired
- Loss of appetite
- Sweating at night
- Chest pain
- Weakness
- Weight loss without trying
- Chills and fever
- Positive TB skin or IGRA test

## How is active TB treated?

TB germs are very strong, so it may take a long time for them to die. You may have to take different types of TB medicines, for at least six months. You must take all of your medicine as directed by your health care provider. Taking medicine the wrong way helps germs grow stronger. Sometimes they get so strong that they develop antibiotic resistance. This means the medicine doesn't work on these germs anymore. If TB germs keep outsmarting the medicines we have, we may run out of ways to kill them.

## What are some of the side effects of TB medicines?

Side effects are rare with these pills, but you may feel:

- Continued loss of appetite
- Always feeling tired for no reason
- Feeling dizzy or sleepy
- Yellow eyeballs
- Yellow skin
- Rash, itching
- High fever
- Blurred vision
- Unusual pain in hands, feet, or joints
- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dark colored urine (color of coffee or tea)
- Any other unusual symptoms

## What happens if I don't take the pills as prescribed?

You can stay sick for a longer time. You can pass TB germs to others. Your TB germs can become resistant to the medicine you take. This is very difficult to treat and can take much longer to cure (up to 24 months).

Your health care provider recommends that you get your medicine through Directly Observed Therapy or DOT. **DOT is a very special service given only by the Department of Public Health.**