

## What is Directly Observed Therapy?

DOT is a partnership between you and your health care worker. He or she will make sure that you take all of your TB medicines as prescribed so that you can complete a course of therapy.

When you are placed on DOT, your medicine is given to you by a trained health worker from the Department of Public Health at a time and place that you both agree on. This may be your home, clinic, or place of work.



All TB medicines will be given and evaluation of your TB will be conducted by the Department of Public Health. Its physicians and nurses, who are experts in treating TB, will be in charge of your care.

## What role will 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.

It is responsible for making sure that you receive proper treatment for your TB, and for preventing the spread of TB to others.

To prevent the spread of TB to your family and friends, your health care provider may recommend that they get a TB skin test (TST).



If they have a positive reaction to the skin test, their doctor will probably order a chest X-ray to see if they have TB infection or active TB disease.

If they have a negative reaction to the skin test, they should have the test repeated after two to three months.

For more information on TB, visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tb) or contact your local health department.

# Active TB Disease

Take control of your health



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
**Public Health**  
Tuberculosis Control Program

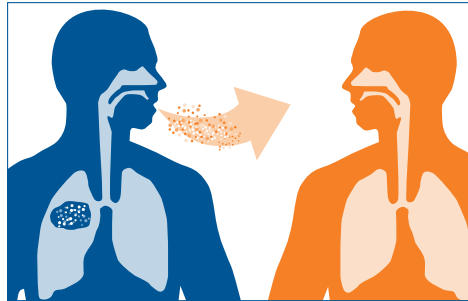
## What is active TB disease?

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 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, but 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 have TB germs in your body, but they are asleep.



However, if your immune system weakens, these TB germs may “wake up” and multiply. You may then get sick with active TB disease. You cannot catch TB from clothes, dishes, food, bedding, or physical contact with someone who has active TB disease.

Anyone can get active TB disease. But you are more likely to get it if you have TB infection and are HIV positive, are a substance abuser, are very young or elderly, or have a condition that weakens your immune system, like diabetes or cancer.

## What are some of the signs and symptoms of active TB disease?

- Bad cough for three weeks or more
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- Weakness
- Feeling very tired
- Loss of weight without trying
- Loss of appetite
- Chills and fever
- Sweating at night
- Positive TB skin test (usually)
- Abnormal chest X-ray (usually)

## How is active TB disease treated?

TB germs are very strong, so it may take a long time for them to die. That is why you need to take all of your medicines, as directed by your health care provider, to treat active TB disease.



You will start off with many kinds of TB medicines, which you will need to take for at least six months.

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

Although side effects are rare with these pills, they may include the following:

- 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, joints
- Headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Any other unusual symptoms
- Dark-colored urine (the color of coffee or tea)

If you have any of these side effects, immediately tell your doctor, nurse, or trained health worker from the Department of Public Health.

Note: If taking Rifampin, it is common for your bodily fluids (i.e., urine, sweat, and tears) to turn orange or red. This may stain your contact lenses, but is not harmful to you.

## 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).

To cure you of TB disease, your doctor recommends that you get your medication through Directly Observed Therapy, or DOT.

**DOT is a special service given only by the Department of Public Health.**