

Title: Latent Tuberculosis and Risks of isoniazid therapy

Author: Kevin Quinn

Date: Jan 08, 2007

Key words: Latent, Tuberculosis, isoniazid

Abstract: Liver damage from isoniazid therapy for latent tuberculosis occurs in 5-10 people per 1000 patients. The risk is greatest in those over 35 years of age.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

# LATENT TUBERCULOSIS

## What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is a disease that usually attacks the lungs but can affect almost any part of the body. A person infected with TB does not necessarily feel ill – and such cases are known as silent or “latent” infections. When the lung disease becomes “active”, the symptoms include cough that last for more than two or three weeks, weight loss, loss of appetite, fever, night sweats and coughing up blood.

## What causes TB?

TB is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacterium can cause disease in any part of the body, but it normally enters the body through the lungs and resides there.

## What is Latent TB?

Most people who become infected with TB are able to fight the bacteria and stop them from multiplying. In many of these people, the bacteria become dormant. This is called latent TB infection. People with latent TB infection usually have a positive skin test reaction, but have no symptoms.

## Can someone with Latent TB spread the bacteria to others?

No, only persons with active tuberculosis can spread the bacteria to persons around them.

TB  
the  
lat  
act  
if t  
Th  
Or  
tha  
10  
wit  
be  
du  
pe  
sys  
the  
de  
is  
pe  
sys  
pe  
im  
do  
rea  
the  
lat  
dis

## **If I have latent TB infection, how can I keep from developing active TB disease?**

The medicine usually taken for the treatment of latent TB infection is called isoniazid (INH). INH kills the TB bacteria that are in the body. If you take your medicine as instructed by your doctor or nurse, it can keep you from developing active TB disease. Children and people with HIV infection may need to take INH for a longer time.

Because there are less bacteria in a person with latent TB infection, treatment is much easier. Usually, only one drug is needed to treat latent TB infection. A person with active TB disease has a large amount of TB bacteria in the body. Several drugs are needed to treat active TB disease.

Sometimes people are given treatment for latent TB infection even if their skin test reaction is not positive. This is often done with infants, children, and HIV-infected people who have recently spent time with someone with active TB disease. This is because they are at very high risk of developing active TB disease soon after they become infected with TB bacteria.

It is important that you take all the pills as prescribed. If you start taking INH, you will need to see your doctor or nurse on a regular schedule. He or she will check on how you are doing.

## **What are the risks of Latent TB therapy?**

Some people have side effects from INH, the most serious of which is liver damage. A recent study reports that the liver damage occurs in 5-10 in

10  
the  
in  
If  
fol  
yo  
aw

Wa  
be  
liq  
be  
yo  
inf

Pe  
inf  
syn  
dis  
syn  
dis  
do