

Treatment of TB Disease

Can TB disease be cured?

YES. TB disease can be cured with modern medicine in almost all cases.

In Japan, a typical treatment period is between 6 to 9 months using 2 to 4 types of medicines. In most cases, the treatment will complete within a year. TB will be cured if medicine is taken as directed by your doctor. HIV infected persons require a longer treatment period.

TB bacteria can at times be "resistant". This means the TB medicine is ineffective in killing TB bacteria. When this happens, combinations of other medicine will be given. The treatment of resistant TB is more difficult and takes more time but in most cases it is curable.

The medicine for TB is relatively safe. However, it can occasionally cause side effects. These side effects could be major or minor. If you find major changes in your health conditions, that is side effects, please inform your doctor or nurse right away. They may instruct you to stop taking your medicine or ask you to come for a check-up.

What side effects should I watch out for?

The side effects listed below are major and serious ones. If you have any of these symptoms, please contact your doctor or nurse right away. (See the table for the side effects categorized per type of medicine)

- yellowish skin or eyes
- darker urine
- nausea or vomit
- loss of appetite
- changes in eyesight
- unexplained fever
- unexplained fatigue
- stomach cramps
- numbness in extremities or aching joints
- rash
- dizziness or faintness
- easy bruising or easy bleeding
- ringing in the ears or changes in hearing

Why do TB medicine have to be taken for so long?

TB medicine has to be taken for a long period of time to make sure that the medicine reaches all TB bacteria in the body.

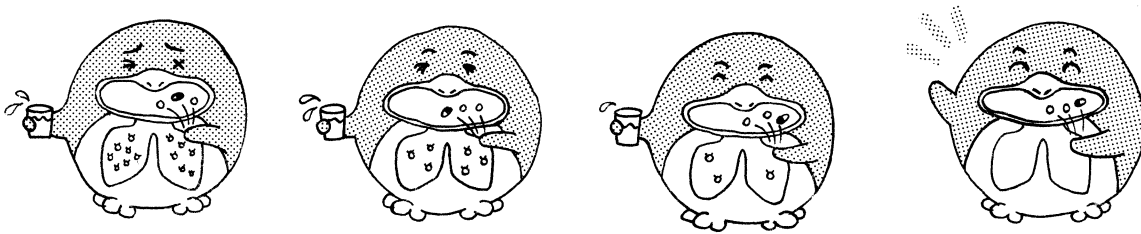
TB bacteria are strong. Some may be killed immediately after you start medicine, but most are killed slowly and so it takes a while for all of them to die.

Why does TB medicine need to be taken regularly?

TB bacteria die very slowly. It takes at least 6 months for the medicine to kill all the bacteria. You will usually feel better after only a few weeks of treatment, but at this stage, TB bacteria are still alive in your body. Therefore, even if your health improves and the symptoms of TB disease disappear, you must continue your medicine until all TB bacteria die.

If you stop your treatment after you start feeling better, or take your medicine irregularly, you could end up in a dangerous situation. TB bacteria could grow again and you could be ill for a longer period. In addition, the bacteria could become resistant to the medicine. If the old medicine no longer work, new different types of medicine will be required to kill TB bacteria. These new medicines must be taken for a longer period, and have more serious side effects.

If people on treatment become infectious again, they can give TB bacteria to their family, friends or anyone else they spend time with. It is very important to take TB medicine as instructed by your doctor or nurse.



TB will be cured if medicine is taken regularly and correctly.

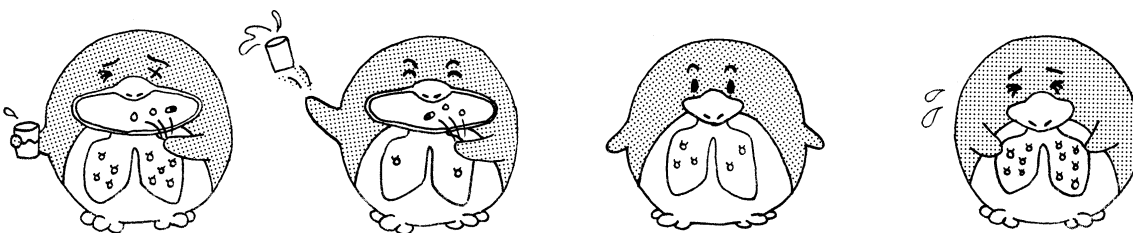
I feel better. Why do I have to keep taking the medicines?

Even if you feel better, please DO NOT stop taking your medicine.

Many active TB bacteria still remain in your body.

If you stop medicine, the bacteria which are not dead yet will multiply to make you sick again. It takes a long time to kill all TB bacteria.

TB patients are at risk of developing resistant TB disease. Drug resistant TB can develop when a TB patient stops medicine too early. A patient with resistant TB of the lungs or throat can transmit the drug resistant bacteria to others around him/her including their family and friends.



If medicine is stopped too early, TB returns.

How should the medicine be taken to remember to take daily?

The only way to recover from TB disease is to take medicine exactly as instructed by your doctor. It is not easy. As you will take the medicine for more than 6 months, you have to incorporate it into your daily routine. Here are some ways to remember to take your TB medicine:

- Take it at the same time everyday, for example, you can take it before or after breakfast, during a coffee break or after brushing your teeth. This will help you to remember to take the medicine.
 - Ask your family or friends to remind you to take your medicine. They may support your treatment.
 - Mark up each day on a calendar after taking your medicine. You can see your treatment progress.
 - Keep your medicine in a weekly pill dispenser. Keep it by your bed or in your purse or pocket.
- If you forget to take your medicine, skip that day's dose and take the next dose as scheduled. Inform your doctor that you missed the dose.

What are important to take TB medicine?

Taking medicine at the same time as a daily routine will help you not to forget to take everyday. It is best to take medicine on an empty stomach. Therefore, you should take medicine half an hour before meals, at least an hour after meals or at bedtime. In Japan, the most common instruction is to take medicine after breakfast.

Other important things to take TB medicine are:

- inform your doctor or nurse of any other medicine you are taking.
- inform your doctor or nurse if you are taking contraceptive pills.
- eat a healthy diet and get plenty of rest.
- avoid alcoholic beverages.
- do not worry if urine, saliva, or tears turn orange. This is a normal side effect of the TB medicine called Rifampin.

What happens if I forget to take my medicine?

If you forget to take your daily dose once, DO NOT WORRY. Just continue taking your next daily dose as scheduled. If you forget too many times, the medicine may not work and you may develop resistant TB. If you are HIV infected, it is especially important that you DO NOT MISS taking your TB medicine. Inform the people related to your health whenever you forget to take your medicine.

Why do I need regular clinic or doctor visits?

You will be given regular appointments to see a doctor while you are taking medicine.

The people related to your health want to see you to:

- make sure the medicine is working
- make sure the medicine has not given you any side effects
- check your sputum to make sure that you are not spreading the bacteria
- give you your medicine

How can I keep from spreading TB?

The most effective way to keep from spreading TB is to take your medicine exactly as instructed by your doctor or nurse. If the medicine is taken as directed, it will usually stop you from spreading the bacteria within a few weeks. But remember, **YOU ARE NOT YET CURED**. The most important thing is to continue your medicine as prescribed until your doctor says you can stop.

If your TB disease is serious enough to require hospitalisation, you will be kept in an air ventilated room to keep from spreading TB bacteria.

As an infectious TB patient, there are things you can do to protect yourself and people around you.

Your doctor may give the following instructions:

- Taking medicine is most important.
- Cover your mouth with your hand or using a tissue whenever you cough or laugh.
- Do not go to work or school while you are infectious. Avoid close contact with others until the doctor admits it.

Tell those who you spend a lot of time with to get tested for TB. The test is especially important for young children and HIV infected persons as they could become sick from TB within a short period.

Can I continue my usual lifestyle ?

During the first several weeks of TB treatment, your activities and contacts may be restricted until the doctor decides you are no longer contagious.

Most TB patients live at home and continue their normal activities. Once you no longer spread TB bacteria, you can near anyone including children. You can continue your regular activities and there are no risks for others to be near you as long as you continue taking your medicine. You **DO NOT** need to be kept in a separate room or use separate dishes.

TB used to scare people away before the invention of modern medicine. Today, as long as you take your medicine as directed, no one needs to be afraid of being near you.

Fresh air, rest and a healthy diet can help you, but they cannot cure you. Only your medicine can cure your TB.