

TUBERCULOSIS (TB)/ HIV CO-INFECTION

What is HIV/AIDS?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is an infection which weakens your immune system (your body's defences). The advanced stage of HIV is called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

HIV can be spread in ways such as:

- vaginal sex (penis in vagina, vagina to vagina)
- anal sex (penis in rectum)
- oral sex (mouth on genitals) - any sores or cuts in the mouth or genitals increases the risk of transmission.
- sharing equipment, needles and/or syringes for drugs/steroids
- sharing sex toys
- an infected mother to her unborn, newborn or breastfed baby
- non-sterile or used equipment for tattooing, electrolysis, ear/body piercing, acupuncture

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria (germs) that are spread from person to person through the air by coughing. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body such as lymph nodes, kidneys, or spine. TB is not highly contagious.

Not everyone who is infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. In fact, there are two distinct TB conditions: latent TB infection and active TB disease.

What is latent TB infection (LTBI)?

People who breathe in air containing TB bacteria can become infected with TB. This infection is called Latent TB Infection (LTBI). People with LTBI have a positive TB skin test, but do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms.

People with LTBI are not contagious and cannot spread TB infection to others.

Everyone who is infected with TB bacteria is at risk of developing active TB disease at some point in their lives. This may happen if their immune system is weakened by age, disease or stress. People with LTBI are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing TB disease in the future.

What is active TB disease?

In people with active TB disease, the bacteria are growing, which causes damage and makes them feel sick. People with TB disease of the lungs or throat can spread TB to others. They are prescribed drugs that can treat TB disease and stop its spread.

The symptoms of TB disease in adults may include cough, chest pain, unexplained pain, fever, loss of appetite, weakness, weight loss, chills and night sweats.

What is TB/HIV co-infection?

TB/HIV co-infection occurs when a person is infected with both HIV and TB.

Why is it important to treat people who have TB/HIV co-infection?

For some people with HIV, TB may be the first serious disease that they develop. In fact, TB is known as an AIDS defining illness.

Someone with untreated LTBI and HIV infection is 20-30 times more likely to develop TB disease during their lifetime than someone without HIV infection.

TB is the most common cause of death globally among people with HIV, accounting for approximately one third of AIDS deaths yearly.

How does HIV infection affect TB?

HIV weakens the immune system and increases the likelihood of acquiring new TB infection or reactivating previously treated TB disease.

HIV infection is the most serious risk factor for causing latent TB infection to progress to active TB disease. TB bacteria speed up the progress of AIDS in the body.

The two diseases are a very serious combination because they are more destructive together than either disease is alone.

Can I receive treatment for TB and HIV at the same time?

People with HIV and TB can be treated for both diseases at the same time. This requires close follow up by a doctor who specializes in treating infectious diseases.

If you have HIV get tested for TB. If you have TB infection or TB disease, get tested for HIV.

To learn more about TB, its treatment and prevention visit www.peel-stoptb.ca

To learn more about HIV/AIDS visit www.peelregion.ca/health

Still have questions?

Contact Peel Public Health at (905)-799-7700, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

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