

Tuberculosis (TB) Disease in Children is:

Preventable
Treatable
Curable



For more information about TB, speak with your doctor or call Peel Public Health at **905-799-7700** or visit **peel-stoptb.ca**.

Produced by Peel Public Health in collaboration with Dr. Ian Kitai and Patricia Malloy at The Hospital for Sick Children and Toronto Public Health.

Selected images adapted from New Jersey Medical School Global Tuberculosis Institute, the World Lung Foundation Image Library and the CDC/Gabrielle Benenson.

Preventing Tuberculosis (TB) Disease in Children



What parents need to know

Tuberculosis is caused by TB germs (bacteria) that are spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as lymph nodes, kidneys or the spine.

The impact of undiagnosed or untreated TB in children is serious. Children are more likely than adults to develop TB disease soon after infection. They are also more likely to develop severe forms of TB.

**Most TB in children is caused by exposure
to adults with infectious TB.**



How do I know if my child has been exposed to infectious TB?

Public Health notifies people who may have been exposed to TB.

What should I do if my child has been exposed to infectious TB?

You **must** take your child to a doctor as soon as possible for TB testing.

A TB skin test will be done to see if there are TB germs in your child's body. If the test is positive, your child has Latent TB infection. If the test is negative, your child may need to be tested again. It may take up to 8-10 weeks after exposure for your child's body to show if it has been infected or not.

All children should get a TB skin test and a check-up for symptoms of TB. Any child with a positive TB skin test or symptoms of TB will need a chest x-ray.

Children under five years of age should have a chest x-ray even with a negative skin test. If they do not have active TB disease they should still be given TB medicine until the repeat TB skin test is done 8 -10 weeks later.

Your child needs to be treated until the repeat skin test confirms whether or not your child has been infected. Young children need this medicine to protect them as they have lower immunity than older children and adults, and may get very ill during these 8-10 weeks.

If the repeat skin test is negative, the medicine can be stopped and nothing further needs to be done. If it is positive, your child has Latent TB infection and should continue taking the medicine for nine months.

Active TB Disease in Children

A child with TB disease has active germs in the body. The child is sick and may pass the germs to others.

Children under five years of age often do not have TB signs and symptoms, and are usually not infectious. Older children and adolescents usually have symptoms, such as fever, cough, night sweats, weight loss, pain and/or swelling.

Latent TB Infection (LTBI)

A child with LTBI has sleeping (dormant) germs in the body and will have a positive skin test. The child cannot pass the germs to others, but can become sick with TB disease if left untreated. Your child can continue to go to school and day care and play with others. You should keep a record of your child's TB skin test result.

Why should my child be treated for LTBI?

A child with LTBI can develop TB disease soon after infection.

Early treatment of TB infection reduces the chances of children becoming sick with TB disease.

TB disease in children can be very severe and may cause lifelong health problems, brain damage, even death.

TB disease may interfere with a child's growth and development. Children with the disease are often away from school for long periods of time, interfering with their learning and social development.

How is LTBI treated?

Children with LTBI are treated with specific TB medication. All medication for TB is free through your local public health unit.

The medication is available in liquid, pill or capsule form.

Can the medicine cause any problems?

TB medications are considered very safe, but some medicines may have side effects.

STOP THE MEDICINE AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY if your child has any of these symptoms:

- Nausea/vomiting
- Rash
- Stomach pain/tummy ache
- Lack of appetite/not hungry
- Yellowing of the eyes
- Loss of energy/more tired than usual

Inform your doctor about other medicines your child is taking.

Tips to help you remember to give your child the medicine:

- Keep the medicine in a place where you will see it, but out of reach of children.
- Use a pill organizer (dosette) if the TB medicine is in pill or capsule form.
- Give your child the medicine at the same time every day, such as before meals or before bedtime.
- Mark off your calendar every time your child takes a dose of the medicine.

Tips to help your child swallow the medicine:

- Crush pills or empty the capsule into a bowl and mix with a small amount of soft foods, such as apple sauce, mashed bananas, yogurt, baby food or pudding.
- Praise your children when they swallow the medicine.
- Make it fun. Your child can mark the calendar with stickers.

