



Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV

What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious condition that can affect anyone, but people living with HIV (PLHIV) are at increased risk. HIV damages the immune system, making it easier for TB to take hold. This is why people with TB are often offered an HIV test as part of their care.

There are two forms of TB:

- **TB disease (active TB):** This form of TB requires urgent treatment with a course of antibiotics. Common symptoms include a cough, fever, night sweats, weight loss, loss of appetite, and tiredness.
- **TB infection (latent TB):** If you are diagnosed with a TB infection, you have TB bacteria living quietly in your body. They are not causing symptoms and cannot be passed to others. However, you can become ill with TB disease at any time, especially if your immune system is under stress. This is more likely in people with diabetes. Treatment with antibiotics can help prevent this.

What is the link between TB and diabetes?

There is a strong link between TB and diabetes, which can complicate both diagnosis and treatment.

- **Weakened immune system:** Diabetes, especially if not well-controlled, can weaken your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight off the TB bacteria. This increases your risk of developing TB disease.
- **TB affecting diabetes:** When you have a condition like TB, your blood sugar levels can rise, making it more difficult to control your diabetes.
- **Treatment challenges:** The medications used to treat TB can also affect your blood sugar levels. This means you and your healthcare team will need to closely monitor both conditions.

How will my diabetes affect my TB treatment

Because of the relationship between the two conditions, your TB treatment might be a little different:

- **Longer treatment duration:** People with diabetes sometimes need a longer course of TB antibiotics to ensure the infection is fully cured.
- **Higher risk of treatment failure or relapse:** Having diabetes increases the risk of TB treatment not working as well or the infection coming back after you finish treatment. This is why it is so important to take all your medication exactly as prescribed and attend all your appointments.
- **Managing your blood sugar:** It is crucial to manage your blood sugar levels as effectively as possible throughout your TB treatment. Doing so will help your immune system, improve your response to the TB medication, and reduce the risk of complications. Your healthcare team may adjust your diabetes medication to help with this.

What do I need to do next?

- **Tell your healthcare team about all your medications:** This is vital to prevent drug interactions and ensure both conditions are managed correctly.
- **Take your TB medication every day:** This is the most important step. Do not skip doses or stop taking your medication, even if you start to feel better, as this can lead to the TB bacteria becoming resistant to the antibiotics.
- **Monitor your blood sugar regularly:** Check your blood sugar levels as advised by your diabetes team. If they are consistently high or low, let your doctor or nurse know.
- **Be aware of side effects:** If you experience any new symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, or a yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice), contact your healthcare team immediately.
- **Attend your appointments:** Regular check-ups with your doctor or TB nurse help you monitor your progress, manage your diabetes, and address any concerns.

Information and support

TB Alert information service: for any questions or concerns about TB, email contact@tbalert.org or call **0330 102 2403**.

This number is low cost or free to call by mobile phone, depending on your contract.

Peer support: talk to others who have been through TB online at: healthunlocked.com/tb-alert

Or email contact@tbalert.org to arrange direct support.