



Latent **TB** testing and treatment in pregnancy

Latent tuberculosis (TB) testing and treatment in pregnancy

Latent TB is a condition that increases your risk of falling ill with tuberculosis (TB). If you have lived in a country where TB is common there is a 1 in 4 chance that you have TB bacteria 'asleep' in your body. These sleeping TB bacteria, known as

latent TB, can 'wake-up' at any time to make you ill. Fortunately, latent TB can be treated with antibiotics before it can cause any harm. Latent TB is found through a simple blood test, which is offered to you as part of your routine pregnancy screening.

What is the latent TB test looking for?

The latent TB test looks for signs that you have breathed in the bacteria that cause TB. These bacteria can remain asleep in your body for many years without you knowing.

What does the test involve?

You will be asked to give a blood sample. This may be taken at the same time as the blood samples for your other antenatal tests, or in a separate appointment at your GP surgery or local TB clinic.

Is the test safe?

There are no risks for you or your baby associated with this test.

Do I need to have this test?

This test is recommended if you have recently settled in England from a country where TB is common, as you are more likely to have latent TB in your body. You can choose not to have the test but there is no way of knowing that you have latent TB without it. You could still have latent TB even if you have had the BCG vaccination or a clear chest x-ray.

What if I decide not to have the latent TB test?

You can decide not to have this test, but it is a good way to protect your health and your family. If you change your mind, you can ask your midwife for the latent TB test at any stage of your pregnancy, or arrange a test through your GP or TB service at any time.





If you test positive for latent TB and do not receive an appointment letter 2-3 months after the birth of your baby, please contact your GP or TB service

Getting my results

Your GP or your midwife will discuss your results with you at your next antenatal appointment.

If you receive a negative result

A negative test for latent TB means that your body is free from TB bacteria. This is good news. However, there is a chance you could be exposed to TB in the future so it is always good to know the common symptoms of active TB. These are cough, fever, weight loss, night sweats, loss of appetite and tiredness.

If you receive a positive result

A positive test for latent TB gives you important information to help you protect your health and your growing family. Treatment is available for latent TB and your GP or midwife will refer you to your local TB Service to discuss this. Treatment is offered to you after your baby is born. Your health will also be monitored throughout your pregnancy.



How can I protect my family?

If you develop active TB you risk passing it on to others, particularly your children and other members of your family. So the best way to protect them is to have your latent TB treated. Other members of your family may also benefit from a latent TB test. Encourage them to speak to their GP about this.

If you are offered a BCG vaccination for your baby you should make sure they have it as soon as possible. The BCG is offered to infants with a parent or grandparent who has lived in a country where TB is more common, or who live in an area of the UK with a high rate of TB.

It is also important to remember the common symptoms of active TB. This way you can speak to a doctor quickly if you or anyone in your family has them. These are cough, fever, unexplained weight loss, night sweats, loss of appetite and tiredness – though symptoms can be vague and depend on the part of the body affected.

What treatment do I need for latent TB?

Latent TB is treated with two of the same antibiotics that are used to treat active TB, though treatment for latent TB is often shorter and involves fewer tablets. You may be given *Rifampicin* and *Isoniazid* for three months (often together in a tablet called *Rifinah*) or *Isoniazid* by itself for six months.

What do I need to know about latent TB treatment?

You should discuss the timing of your treatment with your TB doctor or nurse. Though latent TB treatment is safe during breastfeeding, you may prefer to wait until your baby has weaned off breast feeding. However, it is important to complete your treatment before you plan another baby, as pregnancy increases your risk of developing active TB.

You should also let your doctor or nurse know if you plan to start taking the contraceptive pill during the course of your treatment. Oral contraceptives may not work so well while you are taking TB medicine.





Sources of information

There are many sources of advice and support if you have any questions about TB or antenatal latent TB testing:

TB Alert

www.tbalert.org

www.thetruthabouttb.org/latent-tb

Support and advice for people concerned about TB



NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

Information about TB and help to register with a GP

NCT

www.nct.org.uk

Support for women and parents through pregnancy and early parenthood

Data sharing

Your data will be shared with the national latent TB programme run by Public Health England (PHE). Your information is used to help:

- 1. understand any links between your background and risk of latent TB;*
- 2. show that latent TB testing and treatment prevents active TB, by matching your record to the national active TB notification database;*
- 3. link the outcome of your test with the outcome of any treatment you may need;*
- 4. ensure you are only tested for latent TB once.*

If you do not consent to sharing personal information you can opt out, then only relevant background and medical outcomes that cannot identify you will be shared. Further detail on this can be found at **www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/tsd/ig/ig-fairprocess**.

If you do not want any information to be shared at all, or require further detail and do not have internet access, please write to:

Head of Public Accountability
Public Health England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

The NHS logo is a blue rectangle with the white letters "NHS" inside.

HEALTH CENTRE

