

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS? WHEN SHOULD I WORRY?

There are not many serious side effects to the drugs for TB, and very few people have them. Do contact your doctor if you have any of the following reactions:

- Allergic reaction
 - skin redness
 - itching
- Digestive problems
 - nausea
 - vomiting
 - loss of appetite
 - pains in the stomach
 - stomach cramps
- Other
 - fatigue, loss of energy
 - pain in joints or muscles
 - changes in how you see the colours red and green
 - numbness or painful tingling in hands or legs

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

- Drink as little alcohol as possible during treatment.
- If you are taking any other prescription or non-prescription drug, be sure to tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you are taking rifampicin:
 - your urine, saliva or tears may look orange;
 - your contact lenses may become permanently tinted orange, so avoid wearing them.

- It is important that women avoid becoming pregnant. Rifampicin greatly reduces the effectiveness of birth-control pills. If you use the pill, other contraceptives, such as condoms, should also be used. If you are pregnant or become pregnant during your treatment, be sure to tell your doctor.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MEDICATIONS FOR TUBERCULOSIS?

Scientific Name	Commercial Name
Isoniazide (INH)	Isotamine
Rifampin Rifampicin	Rifadin Rimactane, Rofact
Ethambutol	Myambutol, Etibi
Pyrazinamide	Tebrazid

- Your doctor may prescribe vitamin B6 to prevent the numbness or tingling that may be caused by isoniazid.

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*You're taking
medication for
TUBERCULOSIS?*

**Then you probably
have some questions...**



WHY MUST I TAKE SO MUCH MEDICATION FOR SO LONG?

The germs that cause tuberculosis are very difficult to kill. In the beginning, your doctor has to prescribe three or four different medications, and the treatment must last at least six months. Do not be discouraged. As soon as the tests show that the germs which caused your tuberculosis can be killed by the medications prescribed, your doctor may reduce the number of drugs you take.

Treatment lasts at least six months because the germs that cause tuberculosis can live for a long time in the body. You must therefore continue to take the medication as prescribed by your doctor, even if you are feeling better after a few weeks of treatment.

During treatment, your doctor may have your spit analysed to check if you are contagious. Even if you are not contagious, you have to continue your treatment to make sure that all the germs are killed. You might have to have blood tests during this time.

Fortunately, all medications for tuberculosis are free in Québec.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I STOP TAKING ONE OR SEVERAL OF MY MEDICATIONS BEFORE MY TREATMENT IS OVER, OR IF I DO NOT TAKE THEM REGULARLY?

You could become even sicker. Some germs might survive, and they will have become resistant to the medications. It would then be very difficult to find medication strong enough to cure you.

Also, tuberculosis is a disease that has to be treated, according to the *Public Health Protection Act*. Therefore, you cannot stop your treatment without authorization from your doctor.

TO MAKE SURE YOUR TREATMENT WORKS:

- Do not change the dosage of your medication or stop taking it without talking to your doctor.
- Choose the time of day that is best for you to take your medication, when you will feel the side effects the least. For example, if you have digestive problems, try taking the medications with food. If you suffer from fatigue, take them before going to bed.

- If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as possible on the same day. Otherwise, take your regular dose the next day. Never take two doses at the same time.
- To make it easier to take your medications regularly:
 - take all your medications at the same time;
 - ask someone close to you to remind you to take your medications;
 - talk to a nurse about using a pill organizer to simplify taking your medications.
- It is also sometimes possible to take your medications only two or three times a week, in front of another person such as someone from your CLSC, school or workplace. Talk to your doctor about this possibility.
- Go to all your doctor's appointments, so that your doctor can check that your treatment is working and help lessen any side effects.

