



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

## Active TB Disease Questions and Answers for Clients

People with active TB disease often have questions about their care and treatment. Here are some common questions and answers that may help you learn more about what to expect:

### **Q: I've been told I have TB disease. What can I expect now?**

Once you are told you have active TB disease, you will receive different handouts from your nurse. These handouts will help you to better understand TB, the medications you will take and what you can do to help prevent spreading TB to others.

You will also get a call from a nurse consultant and/or a public health nurse. These nurses do not work in the TB clinic but are part of the team of health care providers taking care of you and others close to you who may need to be tested for TB. They will ask you about your activities, people you have spent time with and places you have been. This helps nurses to know who to offer TB testing to. These nurses will not share your identity or information with others.

### **Q: What is the treatment for active TB disease?**

Treatment is usually 6 to 9 months, but can be longer in some cases. Different medications (pills) are used to treat TB disease, most commonly isoniazid, rifampin, pyrazinamide and ethambutol. A number of pills are needed at different times in order to best fight off the TB germ. Your nurse and doctor will check how things are going and may make changes as needed.

### **Q: Why do I need to take TB medications for so long?**

TB germs are very strong and it takes at least 6 months of taking the medications to kill the TB germ. Even when you start feeling well, it is very important to keep taking the medications as directed by your doctor and nurse. It is important to let your doctor and nurse know right away if you stop taking your medication as asked by them.

### **Q: How often do I need to come to the clinic?**

You will have regular appointments at the BCCDC TB clinic. In the first month of treatment, you may be seen more often. After that, most people are seen once a month at the clinic.

**Q: Who will I see during these clinic visits?**

We have a great team of people that will help you including nurses, doctors and sometimes pharmacists. Our goal is to help you get better and maintain your health as fast and as safe as possible.

**Q: What happens during these clinic visits?**

We will ask how you are feeling, take your weight, check your eyes, ask about any new medications that you may have started, ask if you are having any side effects, review your TB medications with you and make sure you are doing well. You will also be asked to get some more tests done, such as blood tests, chest x-rays, and sputum samples. This is important as it gives us information on how well treatment is working.

These clinic visits are a great time for you to ask any questions you may have! You can use the lines below to help keep track of any questions you may have:

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**Q: How long are these clinic visits?**

The first clinic visit can take up to 2 hours. The rest of the visits are usually shorter and last about 30 minutes if things are going well.

**Q: When is my treatment completed so that I no longer have to come to the clinic?**

Your doctor will let you know when your treatment will finish. The doctor looks at a number of things such as when your sputum test stops growing the TB germ, changes in your weight, how your medications were taken, the number and type of medications you took, improvements to your x-rays and if overall you are feeling better. Once you complete your treatment, you may be asked to come back to the clinic to make sure you are still doing well. These visits are usually much shorter and will often include a chest x-ray and a health check by the doctor.