

Emergency Preparedness ■ Tuberculosis

■ Individual and Group Safety Information

People with latent TB infection have no symptoms, don't feel sick, can't spread TB to others and usually have a positive skin test reaction. They may develop TB disease later in life if they do not receive treatment for latent TB infection. People cannot be infected by the TB germ through handshakes, sitting on toilet seats or sharing dishes or utensils with someone who has TB.

Usually treatment with isoniazid for about nine months or rifampin for six months can prevent a latent TB infection from developing to active TB. Treatment is recommended for anyone who has a positive skin reaction and is especially important for people who:

- May be infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- Have close contact with a person who has active TB.
- Have a chest X-ray that suggests a TB infection, and they have not had a complete course of treatment.
- Inject illegal drugs.
- Have a medical condition or take medications that can weaken the immune system.
- Had a negative TB skin test within the past two years, but now have a positive test.

Active tuberculosis is an infection that is spreading in a person's body and is very contagious. The World Health Organization estimates that one third of the world's population is infected with bacteria that cause TB.

The following are some suggestions to help avoid getting an active TB infection:

- Do not spend a long period of time in stuffy, enclosed rooms with anyone who has active TB until that person has been treated for at least two weeks.
- Use protective measures, such as face masks, if you work in a facility that cares for people who have untreated TB.
- Increase ventilation in confined areas, especially if someone may have TB.
- Ask your doctor how to prevent TB from spreading to others if you live with someone who has active TB. Help and encourage the person who has TB to follow the treatment instructions.