



# FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOTHERS

ANSWERING YOUR  
QUESTIONS ABOUT  
TUBERCULOSIS (TB)



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## If people breathe in TB bacteria, they can get TB disease or latent TB infection.

**Tuberculosis (TB)** is an infectious disease caused by bacteria.

It spreads from person to person through the air.

**TB Disease:** Bacteria in your body are active and can make you sick. People with TB disease have symptoms such as 3+ weeks of coughing, weight loss, fever, night sweats, or extreme tiredness and may spread TB bacteria to others.

**Latent TB Infection:** Bacteria in your body are "sleeping," but they can wake up and make you sick in the future. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick, and cannot spread the TB bacteria to others. But, the infection can become TB disease in the future if you do not take TB prevention medication.

**1** How do I know I have TB bacteria in my body?

If you've had a **positive TB skin test or blood test** during pregnancy, you may have TB bacteria in your body.

Even if you do not feel sick, speak to your doctor about doing a medical exam and a chest x-ray to make sure you do not have TB disease and infect your child or others during or after your pregnancy. **As a mother, getting tested and treated for TB disease is the best way to protect your baby from TB infection.**

**2** Will the TB vaccine protect my baby against TB?

**No. The TB vaccine ("BCG") does not provide long-term protection against TB.** If you were born outside of the U.S. and have received the BCG vaccine, tell your doctor, who can make sure you get the TB blood test. A positive blood test means you probably have TB bacteria in your body, even if you've received the BCG vaccine.

**3** Is it OK to get a chest x-ray when I am pregnant?

A chest x-ray is very important to find out if you have TB disease. **The amount of radiation to the baby during a chest x-ray is small, and is considered safe in pregnancy.** You will be provided a stomach shield during the x-ray for added protection. Be sure to speak to your doctor about any questions or concerns you have.

**4** Do I need TB medication while I am pregnant and do not feel sick?

**Your doctor will do a medical exam and a chest x-ray to determine if you need TB medicine during pregnancy.** If you have active TB disease, you should get TB medication during pregnancy. If you have latent TB infection, you can usually wait until the baby is born to begin taking medication.

**5** Will the TB medication harm my baby if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

**The TB medications are typically safe for pregnant women and should not cause problems for your baby.** The small amounts of medication passed to babies through breast milk are also safe. Be sure to ask your doctor about the safety of your medications.

**6** How can I protect myself and my loved ones against TB?

**Talk to your family about getting a TB test if they have one of these risk factors:**

- They were born or lived in Africa, Asia, Mexico, Central or South America, the Caribbean or Eastern Europe for one month or longer;
- They have a weakened immune system;
- They lived with or spent time with someone sick with TB

Know your own TB status. **If you have latent TB infection, follow up with your doctor after your baby is born and make sure you get proper treatment. It is an important step to make sure you and your family are safe from TB!**

