

INH (Isoniazid) Information**INH – Tuberculosis medication**

Your positive skin test reaction shows that you have been exposed to tuberculosis at some time in the past. The tuberculosis germ is still present in your body. If your chest x-ray is normal, you do NOT have active TB disease.

TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called TB infection, and this is what you have. Your immune system has trapped the TB germs. However, if your immune system or body defenses go down, as can happen with stress, long-term illnesses, old age, or other stressors such as alcohol abuse, the TB germs may multiply and develop into active TB disease. TB germs can affect other organs besides the lungs.

We recommend that you take preventive medicine now, before your TB infection becomes active TB disease. This medicine, taken every day for six or nine months, will kill the TB germs in your body so that you will not develop active TB disease. The medicine you will be taking is Isoniazid - also called "INH." This medicine may deplete your body's stores of vitamin B₆, so you will also be given additional vitamin B₆, to counteract possible side effects from a lack of this vitamin.

How a six or nine month regimen is determined?

Nine months is the preferred time to take medication as it confers a higher degree of protection against the progression of TB infection to TB disease. The nine month regimen confers about 90% protection versus 70% protection with the six month regimen. Individuals who should definitely take the nine month regimen are individuals in the high risk group – e.g. HIV positive individuals or any immunosuppressed individuals, a recent contact of an active TB case and people showing scarring on their chest x-ray consistent with old TB. The six month regimen is more cost-effective and individuals show better adherence to the six month regimen.

How to take INH

- Take one pill (300 mg.) of INH every day. Try to take your pill at the same time each day. If you miss a day, do not take extra amounts of the medicine.
- Take one pill (300 mg.) of INH daily for six or nine months.
- Take one pill of vitamin B₆ (50 mg.), also known as Pyridoxine, every day with the INH (at the same time) for six or nine months.

Precautions

- Do not drink alcohol while you are taking INH. If you think this will be a problem for you, please discuss it with your physician.
- Blood tests to check liver enzymes will be done as the physician feels is necessary. Be sure to report any side effects or concerns.

Your prescription for INH

- The prescription will be filled each month at McKinley's pharmacy, following a visit to either a nurse or physician.
- Please call the Immunization and Travel Clinic at 333-2702 for an appointment at least one week before you run out of medicine.
- The physician or nurse will ask you how you have been feeling during the past month and if you have had any side effects. A brief exam will then be done.
- Anytime during the month that you have any questions about side effects or other concerns, please call the Immunization and Travel Clinic at 333-2702. The Immunization and Travel Clinic is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. At other times, the Dial-A-Nurse is available at 333-2700.

Possible side effects of taking INH

- You may break out in an itchy skin rash.
- Your urine may become dark, like tea or coffee.
- The whites of your eyes may become yellow.
- Your skin may become yellow.

- You may become nauseated or have abdominal cramping after taking the medication.
- You may have numbness, tingling, or a burning pain in your hands or feet.
- You may experience clumsiness or unsteadiness.
- You may have loss of appetite.
- You may feel unusually tired or weak.
- Certain foods may rarely cause flushing while taking INH. These foods include: cheese (Swiss or Cheshire) or fish (tuna, skipjack, or sardines).

These side effects are usually temporary; however, you should contact the Immunization and Travel Clinic if any occur.

Reminder

Once you have tested positive for TB, you should not take the skin test again. Your body will always remember that you once had TB germs, and will give a positive reaction. At the end of six or nine months, you will receive a letter of completion that you may show to a physician in the future.

Caution

Medications should be taken, without interruption, for six or nine months.

If you don't follow these instructions

- The medications may not be effective in killing the germs.
- By being exposed off-and-on to antibiotics, the germs become resistant and do not respond to the medications, making TB very hard to treat.

Important Notice

If you leave the university before completing the six or nine months of INH medications, please notify the Immunization and Travel Clinic at McKinley Health Center - so that arrangements can be made for you to obtain medications in your new location. Remember that once you start the medicines, it is in your best interest to complete the program.

Please save this handout for reference.

This program is recommended, but not required. Please consider taking this medication. Call the Immunization and Travel Clinic (open Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) at 333-2702, to join the free program, or if you have any questions.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>