

Rifabutin: A patient's guide to taking medicine for tuberculosis

What is Rifabutin?

Rifabutin (RFB) is an antibiotic medicine used to treat tuberculosis (TB). There are two ways it is used:

1. To cure TB disease (when taken with other medicines)
2. To treat inactive (latent) TB in some situations

The TB germs are very strong and are hard to get rid of. You will need to take this medicine for 4 to 12 months in order to kill the TB bacteria and cure TB disease. Your doctor will decide exactly how many months you will take the medicine.

How do I take this medicine?

It is very important that you take the medicine every day or as instructed by your doctor. Tell your doctor right away if you stop taking your medicine. If you miss a dose take it as soon as possible, but never take two doses at one time. Try to take the medicine on an empty stomach. If it upsets your stomach, take it after meals. Store RFB in a cool, dry place.

DO NOT drink alcohol while taking this medicine. You could damage your liver.

Remember to tell your doctor about other medicines you are taking or any new medicines that you start taking. Birth control pills may not work while taking this medicine. If you are pregnant or breast-feeding talk to your doctor before taking this medicine. Do not wear soft contact lens while taking this medicine as it could stain them.

What are some side effects I should watch out for?

Most people have no problems while taking RFB. You will need to be monitored regularly by your doctor while taking RFB. Some common side effects are:

- Upset stomach
- Orange or red colored saliva, tears, urine, stool (not harmful)
- Skin rash, itching
- Flu-like symptoms (fever, chills, dizziness, shortness of breath)

If you have any of the following more serious side effects, stop taking the medicine and call your doctor

- Fatigue/ feeling very tired
- Nausea/ vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Very dark urine
- Fever for 3 days or more

Tips for taking your TB medicine

- Take your medicine at the same time every day, for example:
 - Before going to bed
 - First thing in the morning
- Use a weekly pill container
- Mark off each day on a calendar after you take your pills
- Ask a family member or friend to remind you
- Consider Directly Observed Therapy (DOT)