

DEAR AboutNTM

If you've been diagnosed with nontuberculous mycobacterial (NTM) or *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) lung disease, here are answers to some of the most common questions people are asking.

Q My doctor diagnosed me with MAC lung disease. How is MAC different from NTM?

Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC) is actually a species, or type, of NTM. In fact, it's the most common species. However, there are many different species of NTM. It's important for you and your doctor to know which type of NTM you have because these types may require different kinds of treatment.

Q How serious is NTM or MAC lung disease?

NTM or MAC lung disease is a serious infection that in some cases can cause permanent damage to the lungs. This can lead to NTM lung disease, a progressive and chronic condition. NTM can cause you to experience symptoms like coughing, fatigue, and shortness of breath. **If ignored, your symptoms can worsen.**

Q Are there treatment options available?

There are treatment options available for NTM or MAC lung disease. You may be put on a guideline-recommended multidrug therapy. This means that you will take more than 1 medication at the same time. These medicines work together to attack the NTM bacteria in different ways. Using more than 1 treatment also helps prevent the bacteria from becoming resistant to one antibiotic.

Q How long is treatment for NTM or MAC lung disease?

You may stay on treatment until your symptoms get better and you have fully cleared all NTM bacteria. Once you test negative for the bacteria, you may need to stay on treatment for **several more months**. This is to help reduce the chance of the NTM infection coming back. Treatment can be long. However, when you stick to treatment and work with your doctor, there is a **better chance you will remain negative for NTM**.

Q Since I have been diagnosed with NTM or MAC lung disease, are there recommended lifestyle changes I should make?

When you're living with a lung condition, it's especially important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Exercise and diet can affect how your body works. Some tips for healthy living include managing airway clearance through certain airway clearance techniques, in addition to taking medicine that can help clear the mucus from your lungs. Light activity, such as walking, quitting smoking, and eating a well-balanced diet are also recommended. Talk to your doctor before making any diet or exercise changes, or if you have any questions about your lung health.

Q Is there anything I can do to limit further exposure to NTM bacteria?

Yes, here are a few tips that may help:

- Raise the temperature of your hot water heater to at least 130°F
- Take shorter showers to reduce your exposure to fine water droplets, also known as aerosols
- Clean humidifiers regularly
- Disinfect showerheads by soaking them in household bleach for 30 minutes
- When working with potting or garden soils, wear a mask and moisten the soil to help avoid breathing in dust

Q How do I connect with others?

If you have NTM lung disease, you are not alone. Talking to other people with NTM lung disease can help. Here are some communities that can help you connect with other people who have NTM lung disease:

- NTM Info & Research (NTMir)
- Bronch and NTM 360 Social
- American Lung Association (Inspire™)



If you think you may have NTM or MAC lung disease, talk to your doctor about your next steps. **To learn more, visit [AboutNTM.com](https://www.aboutntm.com).**