

# Mycobacterium avium-intracellulare complex (MAC or MAI)

## What is MAC?

A bacteria that grows in water, soil, and animals. It is related to tuberculosis.

## Who gets MAC?

Anyone can get infected; if your immune system is good or intact, it is usually infecting only one place in your body. There is no sex or race association.

## What does MAC do?

- In patients with emphysema or chronic lung disease or in elderly people, MAC can cause lung infections.
- In children, MAC occasionally goes into the glands or lymph nodes.
- In people with a poor immune system, like with cancer or AIDS (especially with a CD4 count < 50), the MAC can go into the intestines and cause diarrhea; the liver or spleen and cause it to get big; or the blood and bone marrow and cause fever, tiredness, weight loss, and anemia (low red blood counts).

## How do I get MAC?

It is not clear how someone gets the infection but it is not likely to be passed from one person to another. Likely it comes from the environment.

## How do I treat it?

Usually a medicine called a macrolide (either Azithromycin or Clarithromycin) and a medicine called Ethambutol are given to treat this infection together. At least two medicines are needed to treat it. Occasionally Rifabutin or another medication may be added to the treatment.

**If you have further questions, be sure to talk to your primary care provider or your health educator or nurse.**



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