

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is a communicable disease caused by a bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Tuberculosis is a very old disease and caused significant illness through history. Historically tuberculosis was called “consumption”.

What is LTBI?

Latent Tuberculin Infection. Some people may have the tuberculosis bacteria in their bodies, however they are not sick because of it, and they can not pass the bacteria on to another person. Sometimes people who have latent TB develop active tuberculosis as they age or encounter health problems.

What is Active Tuberculosis?

Some people are ill because of tuberculosis. These people have symptoms. Tuberculosis bacteria may be passed on to others if it is present in the lungs or throat. In Ontario active respiratory tuberculosis must be treated and the spread of infection contained.

What are the symptoms of TB?

- Persistent cough that sometimes brings up blood
- Weight loss
- Night sweats
- Fever

How do I know if I have TB?

People who have latent tuberculosis will have a positive Mantoux skin test. The Mantoux skin test is a simple way to determine if someone has been exposed to TB. People with latent TB may also show some lung changes on a x-ray. Active TB patients will likely have changes that can be seen on x-ray as well as symptoms. To confirm the diagnosis a sputum sample is taken and tested for tuberculosis bacteria.

How is tuberculosis spread?

People who have active tuberculosis of the lungs or throat spread the bacteria through talking, coughing, shouting, sneezing or singing. Other people may inhale the small droplets and may become infected. Normally for the infection to spread there must be lengthy face to face contact. It is very important that we take additional precautions to protect others from getting tuberculosis.

What are additional precautions?

It is very important to contain the bacteria so it does not spread to others. We do this by:

1. Isolating tuberculosis patients in a negative pressure room with the door closed and putting an “Airborne Precautions” sign on the door.
2. Wearing a fit tested mask when entering the room.
3. Washing our hands before entering the room and after leaving the room

What about family and visitors?

Family and visitors must first talk with a nurse before coming into the room. Young visitors should be closely supervised.

- All visitors must wash hands before entering the room. After leaving the room visitors must wash hands with available waterless hand rub.
- All visitors must wear a surgical mask.
- Visitors must be escorted in and out of the room by a nurse.

What can I do to help?

1. Remind **all** staff caring for you to wash their hands when they enter your room and when they leave.
2. Remind everyone coming into your room to close the door.
3. Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any questions.