

Tuberculosis Outbreak in Thunder Bay

In follow up to our previous communication, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit is declaring a tuberculosis outbreak in the city of Thunder Bay. To date, we have identified four active cases and a number of symptomatic contacts with confirmatory testing pending. The majority of cases are under-housed. People with HIV, who share close quarters, or with poor nutritional status are more likely to become infected with tuberculosis.

Mycobacterium tuberculosis is transmitted via airborne particles. *M. tuberculosis* may result in asymptomatic, latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) or symptomatic, active tuberculosis disease. LTBI is typically diagnosed via tuberculin skin testing (Mantoux test). LTBI is not contagious, but approximately 10% of people with LTBI will develop active disease sometime in their lives.

Active respiratory tuberculosis, including pulmonary and laryngeal tuberculosis, requires airborne precautions, including fit-tested N95 respirators for healthcare providers.

In response to this outbreak, the TBDHU would appreciate your assistance with the following:

- **Maintain a high index of suspicion** for respiratory tuberculosis in patients who present with new cough, chest pain, lymphadenopathy, hemoptysis, weight loss, fever, or night sweats, especially in patients who are homeless or under-housed.
- **Obtain imaging and sputum samples for diagnosis if you suspect active respiratory tuberculosis.** Tuberculin skin testing (TST) does not have a role in the diagnosis of active disease, as TST may be falsely negative with active disease.
- When ordering sputum samples for suspected cases of active tuberculosis who are currently or have recently been homeless or under-housed, or who report contact with this population, please **include the public health outbreak number TBH-2018-002 on the submitted lab requisition(s).**
- Under Ontario Regulation 559/91 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, **report all confirmed and suspected cases of active tuberculosis, and all cases LTBI** to the TBDHU Infectious Disease Program (625-5900 or 1-888-294-6630).

References:

Canadian Tuberculosis Standards, 7th Edition, 2014: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/canadian-tuberculosis-standards-7th-edition.html>