

Tuberculosis (TB) Assessment for Residents in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes

TB Information

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually cause infection in the lungs; however TB bacteria can affect any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

TB of the lungs is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are released into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes.

Most people who breathe in TB bacteria are able to respond to the bacteria and prevent TB. For others, the bacteria may persist, but the body is able to prevent the bacteria from growing. This is called a latent TB infection. Most people who have a latent TB infection never develop active TB disease. For some however, especially people who have a weak immune system, the bacteria may become active and cause TB disease.

TB Assessment

In Ontario, the law requires that all long-term care and retirement homes assess residents for tuberculosis prior to or shortly after admission.

Recommendations for Residents:

A tuberculosis assessment is important to identify active TB disease to prevent transmission in the Home and to identify latent TB infection so treatment can be initiated, if indicated. Therefore, within 90 days prior to admission or up to 14 days after admission:

1. All new residents must undergo a history and physical exam by a physician or nurse practitioner that includes a symptom review and a chest x-ray for those > 65 years of age. If symptoms or chest x-ray suggest possible active TB disease, the resident should not be admitted to the facility until further assessment is done.
2. A resident who is ≤ 65 years of age with previous negative or unknown skin test results, should have a two-step TST done. A TST is not recommended for residents with a previous positive TST.

Reference:

Public Health Agency of Canada, (2014). *Canadian Tuberculosis Standards*, 7th Edition.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/canadian-tuberculosis-standards-7th-edition.html>