



## **INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

### **Tuberculosis (TB) Patient Information**

#### **What is Tuberculosis (TB)?**

Tuberculosis is a disease that is caused by a germ (bacterium) called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that can float in the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, kidneys, or spine.

**Active TB disease** is most infectious when TB germs are found in the person's sputum (spit).

#### **How do people get TB?**

TB germs get into the air when a person with **TB disease** of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, or speaks. The germs can stay in the air for several hours.

- **TB infection:** People who breathe in these TB germs can become infected. People with TB infection are not sick and cannot spread TB to others. However, they may develop TB disease in the future. Those at risk of infection usually spend many hours every day with someone who has TB disease.
- **TB disease:** People with TB disease are sick. Those with TB disease can spread the TB germs to others. They can also die if they do not get treatment. People with TB disease outside of the lungs cannot usually infect others because their TB germs don't get released into the air.

#### **What are the symptoms of TB?**

The general symptoms of TB disease include feelings of weakness, weight loss, lack of appetite, fever or chills, and night sweats. Symptoms of lung TB disease also include coughing lasting more than 3 weeks, chest pain, and coughing up blood. Symptoms in other areas of the body depend on the areas affected.

#### **How are people tested for TB?**

A Tuberculin Skin Test (TST) is performed by injecting a small amount of fluid into the skin in the lower part of the arm. The size of the swelling is measured 48-72 hours later. A positive test only tells that person has been infected with TB germs, not if it has become TB disease. Sometimes there is a false positive result in people who have received a BCG vaccine in the past.

To diagnose TB disease, the Doctor will take a history to look for risk factors and symptoms. Then, a chest X-ray will be done to look for signs of TB in the lungs. Third, a sputum sample is tested for TB germs. If TB is suspected outside the lungs, other types of tests are needed.

### **What can I do to I prevent TB disease?**

If you have been exposed to someone with TB disease, you should go to your Doctor for testing.

### **How is TB treated?**

**TB Infection** is often treated to prevent the development of TB disease in the future. This will be discussed with your Doctor.

**TB Disease** is treated by taking several drugs for up to a year. **It is important to take the drugs exactly as prescribed and finish the medication.** If treatment is stopped, the person will get sick again and the TB germs may become resistant to those drugs. Resistant TB is harder and more expensive to treat.

### **What does the Hospital do to prevent the spread of TB?**

Anyone who is suspected of having TB disease is placed in a single room equipped with negative pressure air flow, which directs all air to the outside. All hospital workers entering this room wear a special fit-tested mask. Public Health is advised when TB disease is suspected or confirmed.

### **What special precautions are needed for TB at home?**

Outside of the hospital, people may be placed on home isolation. Most people are placed on a DOT program (Directly Observed Therapy) where a healthcare worker visits at home to make sure medication is taken regularly. Public Health workers will let you know what is required.

### **What do I need to know prior to discharge?**

Continue to take medication as prescribed and comply with any isolation guidelines to avoid spreading TB. Public Health will be in contact with you and your family members to determine who requires testing.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 613 -721-2000, ext. 3777