



# Myths Associated with Tuberculosis

## Myth - Tuberculosis is not in Haldimand-Norfolk

**REALITY** - Although Canada as a country has one of the lowest rates of tuberculosis in the world, Ontario has the most TB cases of any province with about one third of these cases living in the greater Toronto area. The incidence rate for active TB cases in Haldimand and Norfolk counties is less than that of Ontario. Locally, Haldimand Norfolk has an average of one confirmed active case annually.

## MYTH - Tuberculosis is not treatable

**REALITY** - The good news is that TB is preventable, curable and treatable. Treatment for tuberculosis in Ontario is free and can be accessed by contacting the health unit.

## MYTH - Tuberculosis only affects one's lungs.

**REALITY** - Pulmonary tuberculosis is the most common form of TB, but there is also extra pulmonary tuberculosis which refers to tuberculosis infection that occurs in another part of the body (other than the lungs) such as a skin or lymph nodes. Miliary tuberculosis is also known as disseminated tuberculosis which is when several different organs are simultaneously affected.

## MYTH - TB is only a problem in developing countries

**REALITY** - The average number of reported new cases of TB in Canada is 1,600 cases per year. The incidence rate for Canada is 4.7 cases per 100,000. Foreign born individuals accounted for 70%

of the newly reported cases. Locally, we have had 5 active cases of Tuberculosis reported within Haldimand Norfolk since 2009, and several Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI). The issues are close to home; it's each of our responsibility to be aware, informed about Tuberculosis and knows what we can do to prevent the spread and protect ourselves.

## MYTH - TB disease and TB infection mean the same thing

**REALITY** - A person infected with a tuberculosis infection is NOT contagious because the germ is inactive or latent; often times, the person does not know he or she is infected because no signs or symptoms are experienced. A person with tuberculosis disease is affected quite differently. This person has the active germ within their body; therefore the person is contagious and may be experiencing signs and symptoms.

## MYTH - TB is a disease of the past and no longer is a public health concern

**REALITY** - Tuberculosis has been around for years and unfortunately has killed millions of people worldwide. Through the years, further understanding has developed such as heightened awareness, increased screening and effective, curable treatment. Tuberculosis remains a disease of concern, with an increase of travel and immigration within Canada; we see active and latent cases. Public Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, work towards increasing the communities' awareness and under-

standing of Tuberculosis, in hopes to reduce the risk and spread of TB and many other communicable diseases.

## MYTH - If I don't have TB symptoms, I do not have Tuberculosis

**REALITY** - A person with TB disease may have any, all or none of the following symptoms: a cough that will not go away; feeling tired all the time; weight loss; loss of appetite; fever; coughing up blood; night sweats. These symptoms can also occur with other diseases so it is important to see a doctor and to let the doctor determine if you have TB. It is also important to remember that a person with TB disease may feel perfectly healthy or may only have a cough from time to time. If you think you have been exposed to TB, get a TB skin test.

## MYTH - If someone coughs, I've acquired Tuberculosis

**REALITY** - TB is not easily caught, it requires being in close contact with someone who has TB for a long time (usually many hours or days). However, you should be aware of the symptoms of the disease so you can seek treatment as soon as possible.

## MYTH - Tuberculosis is Hereditary

**REALITY** - Tuberculosis is NOT hereditary. Tuberculosis is transmitted from person to person through the air during coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing, shouting, and even talking. When a person coughs or sneezes, the tiny germs enter the air where they can be inhaled by those around them.

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