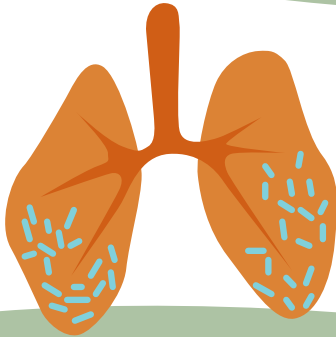
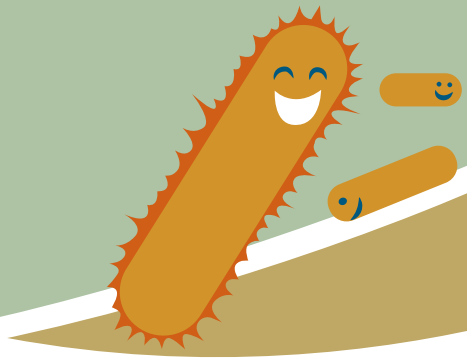


TUBERCULOSIS



Indigenous populations continue to experience higher rates of active Tuberculosis (TB). Inuit communities face even higher rates than First Nations and Métis populations. In 2016, 1,737 cases of active TB were reported in Canada. Of the 333 cases reported amongst Indigenous populations, 63% were First Nations, 34% were Inuit, and 3% were Métis. In 2016, TB rates among Inuit in Inuit Nunanagat, “were over 300 times the rate of Canadian-born non-Indigenous people” (ITK, 2018).

What is Tuberculosis?

TB is a disease caused by bacteria that most often affects the lungs and is spread from person to person through the air. The bacteria can also spread throughout the body, infecting areas such as the kidneys, spine, and brain (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

While latent TB can develop into active TB at any point, this only happens in roughly 10% of people who are infected.

	Active TB	Latent TB
What causes it?	TB bacterium	TB bacterium
Will you show signs?	Yes	No
Can you spread it?	Yes	No

How can you get it?

TB can be spread through germs in the air when someone, “with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, and it is possible for the germs to remain in the air for several hours afterwards” (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). A person may become infected from breathing in TB germs in the air; although this may not turn into active TB.

TB was not always a problem for Indigenous populations; it first arrived in Canada with European settlers in the 1700s. TB was spread to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities during early colonization. Things like starvation, confinement to reservations, residential schools, and poor housing allowed the disease to spread quickly (Canadian Public Health Association, 2018).

How do you know if you or someone you know has it?

Many people do not show any signs of TB, sometimes for years. When you do show signs, they can include: persistent coughing, chest pains, coughing up blood or phlegm, feeling very tired, not feeling hungry, fever.

Latent TB can usually be diagnosed with a skin test done by a medical professional. Active TB of the lungs requires a lab test and chest x-ray to confirm infection. If you have been in contact with someone who has or shows symptoms of TB disease, you need to get checked by your doctor or local health centre.

Prevention

Some precautionary measures can be taken to prevent the spread of TB, which include:



Washing your hands regularly

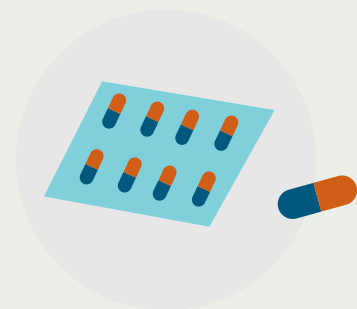


Covering your mouth when you cough

Although TB is preventable and curable, larger issues such as overcrowded housing, food insecurity, and poverty continue to contribute to high rates of active TB amongst Indigenous populations. Therefore we call upon the Federal government to implement calls to action listed below.

Treatment

Tuberculosis is preventable and curable. Antibiotics can cure TB if taken properly. Be sure to take the medication as directed by your healthcare provider.



Calls to Action

In 2017 the Government of Canada and Inuit leaders met and pledged to establish a task force to eliminate TB across Inuit Nunangat by 2030, with reduction of 50% of active TB by 2025 (ITK, 2018).

Some specific recommendations to address TB amongst Indigenous populations include:

- ④ Investments in rapid TB diagnostic technology
- ④ Facilitating timely access to antibiotics used to treat TB, including Rifapentine.
- ④ Culturally-appropriate education and awareness campaigns
- ④ Community mobilization initiatives
- ④ Funding towards addressing inequities in the social determinants of health such as housing, poverty, and food insecurity.



To know for sure if you have it, you need to get tested.



Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada



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