

# Tuberculosis (TB) Medical Surveillance

## What is TB Medical Surveillance?

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) requires immigrants and refugees with TB or previous TB treatment detected in the pre-arrival TB screening program to report to local public health authorities for examination and follow-up; this is TB medical surveillance.
- The purpose of TB Medical Surveillance is to give new immigrants to Canada free medical follow-up to rule out active TB disease and to determine the ongoing follow-up if either active or inactive TB is confirmed. This will prevent the spread of TB in the community.

## What happens when I am under TB Medical Surveillance?

- Within 30 days of arrival to Canada you must report to your local Public Health Unit to meet the IRCC medical surveillance requirements and to review the Health Unit's process for medical surveillance. Bring a copy of your Immigration Medical Surveillance Undertaking Form (IMM Form 0535) to Public Health. During the first talk with your Public Health Nurse, you will be asked about your medical history, your risk factors for exposure to TB and whether you have any TB-specific symptoms. You will need to have a medical assessment by a local Health Care Provider. If you have no signs or symptoms of active TB disease, you can delay that medical assessment until you are eligible to obtain the publicly funded medical insurance, or OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan).

## What do I need to do while I am under TB Medical Surveillance?

- Once you have spoken with your Public Health Nurse and there is no sign that you might have active TB disease, you have a three-month waiting period before you are eligible for OHIP. While in that waiting period you must notify your Public Health Nurse if:
- you move, and provide your new address and/or telephone number – you will also need to notify IRCC at 1-888-242-2100 of your new address;
- you get a primary Health Care Provider;
- you develop symptoms of active TB
- Seek medical attention right away if symptoms of active TB disease develop. The symptoms of active TB include: cough for at least 2 - 3 weeks, fever, night sweats, chest pain, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite and coughing up blood.
- It is recommended that during the waiting period, you obtain private health insurance in case you become ill during that time. If you develop symptoms of active TB disease in the waiting period, the Tuberculosis Diagnostic and Treatment Services for Uninsured Persons Program

(TB-UP) is available to help pay for testing for TB. If active TB is diagnosed, free treatment can be started.

## How do I apply for OHIP?

- Call the Service Ontario Info line at 1-866-532-3161 between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm for information on how to apply for OHIP.

## What will my Public Health Nurse do?

- Your Public Health Nurse will contact your Health Care Provider to obtain the results of your medical assessment and any test results that are required (e.g. chest x-ray, Tuberculin Skin Test or sputum results). Medications to keep active TB disease from starting could be prescribed and if so, your Public Health Nurse will provide the medications to you. TB medications are available free of charge to anyone who requires them. If you are not prescribed medications there may be yearly follow-up assessments that will be done by your Health Care Provider. Your Public Health Nurse will obtain the results of these assessments and contact you on a yearly basis.
- Your Public Health Nurse will also advise IRCC of your fulfillment of your TB medical surveillance condition once you have kept your first appointment with your Health Care Provider.

## How long will I be under TB Medical Surveillance?

- The length of time you will be under TB Medical Surveillance will be determined your Health Care Provider. The length of follow up depends on your risk factors for developing active TB disease. If you are not prescribed medications this timeframe could be as long as 5 years. If you are prescribed medications to prevent active TB disease, the length of time you would be on medications is generally 9 months.
- Your Public Health Nurse will notify you and, if needed, your Health Care Provider once all of the follow-up for medical surveillance is complete.
- If at **any** time you develop symptoms of active TB disease (e.g. cough for at least 2 – 3 weeks, fever, night sweats, chest pain, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite and coughing up blood), seek medical attention **immediately**.

Contact your Public Health Nurse if you have questions at 705-474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808.

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