

Health Unit Media Release

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March 24th is World TB day

March 24th is World TB day. The Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit wants to acknowledge World TB day by reminding the community that tuberculosis is preventable, treatable and curable. Tuberculosis, or TB, is an infectious disease that primarily affects the lungs. If you have been in contact with an infected person, you may be carrying TB germs or bacteria.

There are two phases to tuberculosis - TB infection and TB disease. A person with TB infection (also known as latent tuberculosis) is not sick and cannot spread the disease but it may progress to TB disease (also known as active TB). An individual with active TB disease can spread the disease and should seek medical attention. Symptoms of active TB may include: cough, fatigue, weight loss, fever, loss of appetite, coughing up blood and night sweats.

Early detection for TB infection is an important key in the prevention and spread of the disease. The Mantoux Skin Test method is used to diagnose the presence of TB infection. The test is performed by a nurse or doctor and involves injecting a small amount of testing solution just under the skin on your forearm. A nurse or doctor will interpret your skin test 48 to 72 hours after it was given. She or he will lightly touch the area where the fluid was injected. They are feeling for a raised area or bump at the injection site. If a raised area can be felt, it will be measured and the results will be explained.

If the TB skin test result is positive, your doctor may order a chest x-ray and further follow-up. Your health care provider may recommend a course of antibiotics to stop the infection from becoming TB disease. These antibiotics are free of charge from the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.

The control of tuberculosis is dependant on the community, health care providers and public health officials working together. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health is committed to the vision of healthy people in healthy communities. Successful management of tuberculosis is just one way in which we can achieve our vision.

References:

Tuberculosis Information for Health Care Providers 3rd Edition 2003
LGL Fact Sheet TB background info
The Recorder Times January 7, 2008
LGL Health Unit Fact Sheet
Health Canada Symptoms of TB

Tuberculosis and Traveling

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one-third of the world's population is infected with Tuberculosis (TB). Approximately 95% of cases reported every year occur in developing countries. The spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the emergence of drug-resistant strains of TB threaten to make some cases incurable.

In many countries, tuberculosis may pose a risk for travelers. There are twenty-two countries identified as having a high incidence of TB. These countries are primarily in Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia.

The bacteria causing TB can spread from an infected person to a traveler by coughing, sneezing and even singing near them. The traveler can then inhale the bacteria. TB commonly attacks the lungs but it can also affect other parts of the body such as the kidneys, bones and brain.

Travelers who are planning to be in a country for 3 or more months where there is a high rate of tuberculosis should have a Mantoux skin test before leaving and after returning to Canada. If travelers will be working in health care, correctional facilities, refugee camps, inner cities or homeless shelters for 1 or more months, they should also be tested before leaving and after returning to Canada. A pre-travel Mantoux skin test gives the traveler information about past exposure to tuberculosis. If the skin test indicates no past exposure to TB, the traveler should have a post-travel Mantoux skin test upon return to Canada. This skin test should be done at least 8 weeks after the traveler returns from a country with widespread TB. If the skin test is positive, the traveler may have been exposed to tuberculosis while away. Further medical testing and follow-up is carried out if the test is positive. Tuberculosis can be treated successfully with medication. This can prevent disease and the spread of illness.

If you are planning to travel, call the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit to discuss the risks of tuberculosis.

Reference: Canadian Tuberculosis Standards, 6th Edition, 2007

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