

# Common Myths Surrounding Tuberculosis (TB):

## Together we can stop TB



**Myth:** There is no Tuberculosis (TB) in Canada.

**Fact:** TB still exists in Canada. Although Canada has one of the lowest rates of TB, the disease continues to be a major problem worldwide.

**Myth:** I can't get TB if I had the Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine.

**Fact:** The BCG vaccine is effective for only a short period of time and does not provide protection throughout a person's life. When given in infancy, the protection begins to wear off by adolescence. In countries where TB rates are high, the BCG vaccine is used to protect babies and young children against the most severe form of the disease. The vaccine does not protect adults from developing active TB disease.

**Myth:** A Tuberculin skin test (TST) is a vaccine/blood test used to prevent TB.

**Fact:** The TST is NOT a vaccination or blood test. The TST does NOT protect you from getting TB. A TB skin test will show if you have been infected with the TB germ at some point in your life.

**Myth:** The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) will always cover the cost of a TB skin test.

**Fact:** Generally, the OHIP does not cover the cost of a TB Skin test at the doctor's office or walk-in clinic.

If a TB skin test is required for screening by your employer, volunteering, or specific school programs, then you may be asked to pay for this TB skin test at your doctor's office (cost may vary).

If any Public Health Department has made contact with you and advised you to get a TB skin test for medical reasons, you will NOT be required to pay.

**Myth:** I have a Positive TB skin test - this means I am contagious to others.

**Fact:** Having a positive skin test does NOT make you contagious to others. It means you are infected with TB germs. You will not have symptoms of TB disease, are NOT contagious and cannot spread TB germs to others. There are two conditions related to TB: latent TB infection (LTBI) and active TB disease.

**Myth:** Shaking hands, sharing food, cutlery and plates, kissing or using the same toilet seats, can spread TB germs.

**Fact:** TB is NOT spread by shaking hands, sharing food or drinks, cutlery, plates or cups, bed linens, toilet seats, kissing or even smoking.

TB can only be spread if someone with active TB disease of the lungs or throat forces germs into the air by coughing, sneezing, speaking or singing.

**Myth:** Tuberculosis is a disease, which only affects the lungs.

**Fact:** TB usually affects the lungs and is known as respiratory TB. TB can also affect other parts of the body such as in the glands (lymph nodes), bones, brain, kidneys and spine. When TB germs cause disease outside the lungs, it is called non-respiratory TB disease (and is NOT considered contagious).

**Myth:** TB is highly contagious.

**Fact:** TB is not highly contagious. It takes close, prolonged, repeated contact to become infected.

The health department investigates close contacts of TB cases to determine who may be at risk.

**Myth:** I can lose my job or be deported if I am diagnosed with TB.

**Fact:** Legally, being diagnosed with TB is not a valid reason for being deported from the country or losing your job.

**Myth:** In Canada, there is no cure or treatment available for TB.

**Fact:** There is treatment available for both latent TB infection (LTBI) and active TB disease in Canada. The treatment is free.

Peel Public Health provides free TB medication when ordered through your doctor.

Remember, TB is preventable, treatable and curable.

**Myth:** My family doctor is the only one I can discuss my TB diagnosis or healthcare with.

**Fact:** If you have any questions related to your TB diagnosis, TB skin testing, TB medication, TB contact investigation or medical surveillance for inactive TB, you can call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700. A nurse will be available between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday for information on our programs and services.



For more information,  
call Peel Public Health  
at **905-799-7700**.  
Please note all calls  
are confidential.  
Or visit  
**peel-stoptb.ca** and  
click on  
Downloadable  
Material.

**Let us dispel the myths.  
The facts are loud and clear!**

 **Region of Peel**  
Working for you  
Public Health