

# TB CONTACT INVESTIGATION

TB germs are most likely to be spread to people who spend a lot of time every day with someone who has contagious TB, such as:

- household or family members
- close friends
- co-workers
- classmates at school

These people are called “contacts” and may breathe in TB germs and get latent TB infection (LTBI). Not everyone with close contact will become infected.

The Public Health Nurse (PHN) will help you to identify who may have had close contact with you. You must tell the PHN the names of the people you spend time with and the places you go. It is helpful to make a list and give it to the PHN. The PHN will decide who on your list should be tested and will notify them to get a TB skin test. The PHN may speak with them or send them a letter. The PHN will not tell the “contacts” your name.

The PHN may have to speak to your school principal or employer to get the names of contacts at your school or work. To do this, the PHN might have to tell the school principal or employer your name. The school principal or employer is told that they cannot give your name to anyone else and that all information is confidential.

You may be worried or embarrassed about people learning you have TB. If your family, friends, classmates or co-workers find out that you have TB disease, you can tell them:

- Anyone can get TB. You did not do anything wrong to get this disease.
- You are taking your TB treatment so you can be cured.
- Your doctor and PHN will tell you when you are no longer contagious and can return to your social activities, work or school.
- A PHN will notify them if they need to be tested for TB.
- They can call the Peel Public Health TB Program if they have questions or concerns at 905-799-7700.

## **What should contacts of *contagious TB* do?**

Close contacts of contagious TB disease should have a TB skin test and a medical examination by a doctor or nurse. The PHN will arrange to do the TB skin test or provide letters and medical forms to take to the doctor.

The closest contacts (e.g., family, household members) should have a medical check-up and TB skin test immediately:

- If the skin test is negative, it should be repeated eight to 12 weeks later. It can take up to three months for the body to show signs of exposure to the TB germ.

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- Children four years old and under should also have a chest X-ray, even if their TB skin test is negative. They may also be ordered medicine for protection. See page 13 to read Preventing TB in Children.
- If the skin test is positive, the person has latent TB infection (LTBI) and should have a chest X-ray and medical check-up to ensure they do not have active TB disease. Other tests may also be necessary.
- Contacts with LTBI should discuss preventive medicine with their doctor. Medicine is available to prevent LTBI from becoming TB disease. The medicine is provided free to doctors to give to their patients.
- Contacts that have a record of a positive TB skin test in the past do not need another test. They should see a doctor for an assessment and have a chest X-ray if they have symptoms of TB.

Contacts that spend less time with you and do not live in your house (e.g., people you work or go to school with) may need only one TB skin test after eight to 12 weeks. The PHN will notify them and recommend when their test should be done.

## **What should household contacts of TB that is *not contagious* do?**

People with TB that is outside the lungs or throat cannot spread TB germs to other people. However, people who live in the same house should be screened for TB to see if they have LTBI from a past infection and to be sure they do not have active TB disease.

- They should have a medical check-up and TB skin test at their earliest convenience.
- The PHN can provide letters and medical forms to take to the doctor so they do not have to pay for the TB skin test.
- If the skin test and medical check-up are both negative, no further tests need to be done.
- If the skin test is positive, the person has latent TB infection (LTBI) and should have a chest X-ray and medical check-up to ensure they do not have active TB disease. Other tests may also be necessary.
- Persons who have LTBI should discuss preventive medicine with their doctor. Medicine is available to prevent LTBI from becoming TB disease. The medicine is provided free to doctors to give to their patients.