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From the office of Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health, Southwestern Public Health

## Tuberculosis Update – Invest to End TB. Save Lives.

March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day! This year's theme - *Invest to End TB. Save Lives.*

Approximately one-quarter of the world's population may be infected with latent tuberculosis. With ongoing efforts to fight COVID-19 and challenges to fund TB programs, it is important we turn our attention to this issue. TB is curable and preventable and through your continued support we can work to #EndTB by 2030.

### Local Tuberculosis Statistics, 2021

Episode Type	Elgin St. Thomas # Cases	Oxford # Cases
<a href="#">Latent Tuberculosis Infection</a> (LTBI)	19	11
<a href="#">Active Tuberculosis Disease</a> (TB)	1	2
<a href="#">Non-TB Mycobacterial Infections</a> (NTM)	1	4
<a href="#">TB Immigration Medical Surveillance</a>	2	11

### Diagnosis of Latent TB Infection (LTBI): Tuberculosis Skin Test (TST) & Interferon Gamma Release Assay (IGRA)

TB Skin Tests and IGRAs are acceptable tests for Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI) diagnosis.

TST: Determines if someone has developed a cell-mediated immune response to the Tuberculosis (TB) bacterium. This test does not detect the presence of TB bacteria directly. This immune response occurs if someone has been exposed to TB in the past.

TB skin tests are publicly funded for:

- People who have been in contact with someone with infectious TB (i.e, contacts of active TB)
- People who have recently immigrated from countries where TB is more common
- People under the age of 65 who are entering long-term care facilities
- People who require for admission in a school or daycare program
- People who require for medical reasons (i.e, ordered by physician or nurse practitioner)

The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) **does not** cover the costs of TB skin tests that are required for employment or volunteer purposes.

For information about ordering Tubersol® and billing for insured and non-insured TSTs, visit:

- Billing: [MOHLTC OHIP Bulletin – Tuberculosis Skin Test](#)
- Ordering Tubersol®: [Vaccine Order Form](#)

Southwestern Public Health offers TB skin tests to individuals without a primary health care provider for the following reasons:

- Individuals new to Canada and a test is required for immigration purposes
- Individuals identified as contacts of active TB.

**IGRA (blood test):** Screens for exposure to Tuberculosis by indirectly measuring the body's immune response to antigens derived from the TB bacteria. The IGRA test can differentiate a [Bacille Calmette-Guerin \(BCG\)](#) response from a TB exposure-response. The cost for an IGRA is approximately \$90 and is not covered by OHIP. Visit our website for IGRA testing locations, as IGRAs are not available at all labs.

For more information on TB skin testing eligibility, TB skin testing locations and IGRA lab locations visit our [website](#).

### **Guidance on Testing and Results Interpretation**

- [Tuberculosis Information for Healthcare Providers](#) 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.
- [Online TST Interpreter](#)
- [Tuberculosis Skin Test Training Video](#)

### **Reporting Requirements**

Active TB disease and Latent TB infection (LTBI) are both reportable diseases in Ontario. Patient consent is not required for reporting this information according to the [Health Promotion and Protection Act \(HPPA\)](#).

To report suspected or confirmed active TB cases:

- Call Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) with patient name, date of birth, address and phone number.
- Download, complete and fax the [Tuberculosis \(TB\) Notification Form](#) to SWPH.

To report a positive TB skin test/IGRA:

Complete all five steps, whether you are ordering LTBI medication or not:

- Assess for signs and symptoms of active TB disease (pulmonary and extra-pulmonary).
- Send patient for a chest x-ray anterior/posterior and lateral.
- Counsel about TB risk and recommend LTBI treatment if chest x-ray is normal and patient is asymptomatic.
  - [Tuberculosis Information for Healthcare Providers](#) 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.
  - [Assessment and Treatment of LTBI](#) (for health care professionals)
- Download and complete the [Tuberculosis \(TB\) Notification Form](#).
- Fax the positive TST/IGRA result, chest x-ray ad TB Notification Form to SWPH.

For more information on tuberculosis screening and diagnosis, visit our [website](#).



**Infectious Disease – St. Thomas**  
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Fax: 519-539-6206

References:

1. Stop TB Partnership, 2022, World TB Day 2022.
2. Public Health Agency of Canada, 2014, Canadian TB Standards 7<sup>th</sup> Ed.
3. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2017, OHIP Bulletin #4692
4. Lung Health Foundation, 2021, Tuberculosis Information for Healthcare Providers
5. The Lung Association, 2013, Quick Reference Guide: Assessment and Treatment of Latent TB Infection