

Travel to Areas with Endemic Tuberculosis (TB)?

Information for Healthcare Workers (HCWs)

Certain areas of Canada and other parts of the world experience endemic tuberculosis (TB)*. Healthcare workers (HCWs) who travel to or work in these regions may be exposed to individuals with active TB. For Health PEI (HPEI) HCWs travelling to or returning from TB endemic areas. The following guidelines outline recommended screening and risk assessment practices to reduce the risk of transmission within HPEI healthcare facilities.

To minimize the risk of TB exposure and to ensure appropriate follow-up, HCWs who travel or work, for any period of time in areas with endemic TB are expected to follow the steps outlined below.

Pre-travel Requirements

All HCWs should have documented baseline TB screening that can be used for future comparison after an exposure.

Baseline TB Screening:

- A two-step Tuberculin Skin Test (TST) is recommended once to establish baseline status if not previously documented.
- If prior documented two-step TST is available, a single-step TST can be done if baseline status is unclear.
- Both TST or Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) prior to travel are acceptable diagnostic tests for tuberculosis infection (latent TB infection) for baseline screening.

Risk Assessment:

HCWs should undergo an individual risk assessment that considers:

- Duration of travel
 - Type of work (e.g., direct patient contact)
 - Exposure risk in high-risk settings (e.g., hospitals, shelters, refugee camps)
- Individuals working in healthcare settings in endemic areas are at increased risk of exposure.

Post-Travel & Return to Work Guidelines

If a known TB exposure occurred, or if the HCW worked in a high-risk setting:

- Contact Employee Health for assessment and follow-up
- TB testing should be completed 8–10 weeks after the last potential exposure to allow for the incubation period

Routine annual TB testing is **not recommended for all HCWs**.

Testing should be risk-based, and may be indicated for:

- Repeated or prolonged exposure
- Ongoing work in high-risk or endemic settings.

If symptoms develop HCWs should:

- Seek prompt medical assessment
- Notify Employee Health Nursing
- Symptoms of TB may include persistent cough, fever, night sweats, weight loss

Definition; Endemic tuberculosis (TB): Tuberculosis is consistently present within a defined geographic area or population, with sustained transmission at a stable or relatively high incidence.