

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Requirements for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes

The ***Fixing Long-Term Care Act, (2021)*** and the ***Retirement Home Act (2010)***, requires that all residents admitted to a long-term care (LTC) home or retirement home (RH) be screened for active tuberculosis (TB). This legislation does not stipulate what method should be used to screen staff or residents.

As per the legislation, LTC and RH facilities should:

- Screen residents for active TB within 90 days before admission to the facility, or 14 days after admission.
- Screen new staff and volunteers for active TB upon hiring.

The *Canadian Tuberculosis Standards (8th Edition)* were released in March 2022 and provide updated screening recommendations for LTC home residents. These recommendations should also be applied for RH residents as per *Tuberculosis Program Guideline, 2023 (Ontario Ministry of Health)*.

The Porcupine Health Unit recommends LTC and RH facilities follow these guidelines for residents, staff, and volunteers.

Recommended Guidelines for Residents of LTC and RH Facilities

Residents newly admitted to facility

The Porcupine Health Unit strongly recommends LTC and RH facilities implement the following measures for all new residents admitted to LTC and RH:

- Complete an assessment prior to or on admission to assess the likelihood that the resident is living with active respiratory TB.
- Screen for TB symptoms, prior to, **and** on admission. Symptom screening should include the following symptoms: cough that lasts longer than 3 weeks, productive cough, cough with blood, chest pain, shortness of breath, weight loss, loss of appetite, fever, night sweats, and fatigue.
- Complete a posteroanterior and lateral chest x-ray for symptomatic residents and refer them for medical assessment.

If the resident has had exposure to respiratory TB, the need for testing should be individualized and based on a contact tracing assessment done by public health.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Requirements for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes

Residents currently living at facility

Periodic TB skin tests, such as annual screening tests, are not recommended for residents.

All residents who identify or show symptoms or signs of active pulmonary TB should be placed in airborne isolation (i.e., a single room with a closed door under additional precautions) and receive immediate medical assessment.

If a resident has been exposed to someone with infectious TB, testing should be individualized and based on a contact tracing assessment done by public health.

Recommended Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers of LTC and RH Facilities

New staff

The Porcupine Health Unit strongly recommends that all health care workers have a baseline TB screening, including:

- An individual risk assessment that identifies risk for TB (for example, individual temporarily or permanently resided in an area or country with a high incidence of TB, individual has history of active or latent TB, individual is currently or plans to be treated with medication that suppresses the immune system, or individual is a close contact with someone who has had infectious TB since their last TB skin test),
- A symptom evaluation,
- A TB skin test for those without documented prior TB disease or latent TB infection. A baseline 2-step TB skin test should be done unless there is documentation of a previous negative 2-step test, in which case a 1-step TB test should be done, and all results should be entered into the health care worker's health record.

A tuberculin skin test should not be performed on a health care worker who was previously TST-positive or has prior documented TB disease.

Staff whose TB skin test screens positive should be medically assessed for active TB disease. This includes a chest x-ray and medical assessment by a physician who is experienced in management of TB disease and latent TB infection. Treatment of TB infection should also be considered for staff who are diagnosed with latent TB infection, and they should be educated to monitor for signs and symptoms of TB.

New volunteers

While volunteers should be screened for risk factors for active and latent TB infection, facilities may want to consider performing a TB skin test only if the volunteer expects to volunteer at least one-half day/week or volunteers who have risk factors for active and latent TB infection.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Requirements for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes

Volunteers whose TB skin test screens positive should be medically assessed for active TB disease. This includes a chest x-ray and medical assessment by a physician experienced in management of TB and latent TB infection. Treatment of TB infection should also be considered for volunteers who are diagnosed with latent TB infection, and they should be educated to monitor for signs and symptoms of TB.

Staff and volunteers who currently work/volunteer at the facility

The *Canadian Tuberculosis Standards (8th Edition)* strongly recommends against routine or periodic TB testing of **all** health care workers and volunteers with a negative baseline TB skin test.

Health care organizations can consider whether periodic screening for selected health care workers is warranted based on their organizational risk assessment.

If a staff member or volunteer is exposed to someone with infectious TB, the Porcupine Health Unit recommends that facilities consult with public health.

For more information, please call the Infectious Diseases Team at the Porcupine Health Unit at 705-267-1181 ext 2995.

References

Canadian Tuberculosis Standards, 8th edition (2022).

- [Chapter 4: Diagnosis of tuberculosis infection \(refer to section 3.7.3 Nursing-home and long-term care residents\)](#)
- [Chapter 14: Prevention and control of tuberculosis transmission in healthcare settings \(refer to section 4.1.7 Health care worker testing and treatment; and section 7.1 Long-term care homes\)](#)

Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021. Ontario Government. [O.Reg. 246/22: General. Section \(12\). O. Reg. 246/22: GENERAL \(ontario.ca\)](#)

Retirement Homes Act, 2010, S.O. 2010, c. 11. Ontario Government. [O. Reg. 166/11: General. Section 27. \(8\)\(b\) and \(8\)\(c\).](#)

Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, Assistant Deputy Minister Memo to Retirement Homes. MOH COVID-19 Guidance Updates and Tuberculosis Resident Screening Reminders. February 6, 2023.

Ministry of Health. Tuberculosis Program Guideline, 2023. [Section 10.2](#)