

December 15, 2015

Dear Colleague:

The Canadian response to the Syrian refugee crisis includes an estimated 2500 refugees arriving in Alberta by March 2016. Various resources have been made available to provide guidance for those involved in the medical care for this population. As the guidelines do vary, this letter was developed by Public Health in concert with Infectious Disease, Refugee Health and the Provincial Lab, to address common questions with regards to recommended screening in this population, with a specific focus on infectious disease.

Recommended Infectious Disease Screening Tests in Alberta for Syrian refugees:

- Hepatitis B Serology (HBsAg, Anti-HBSAg, Anti-HBc total)
- Hepatitis C Serology
- If ≥ 13 yrs: Varicella Zoster Virus (VZV) IgG (to determine immunization eligibility)
- If > 15 yrs: HIV and Syphilis Serology, Urine NAAT for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea

Screening for Latent Tuberculosis Infection is not recommended. If clinical concern for active tuberculosis exists, proceed with investigation as usual and consider TB services consult.

Recommended non-Infectious Disease Screening Tests in Alberta for Syrian refugees:

- CBC & Differential; if abnormal Hb or RBC indices, consider G6PD and Hemoglobinopathy Screen

As usual, a history and physical with clinically indicated investigative tests to aid decision-making are always warranted.

The risk for MERs-CoV in this population is low. (Reference:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/if-hp-phys-moh-advisory-mers-cov-cz.pdf>)

However, if a patient presents with a compatible clinical syndrome, please contact the local Zone MOH. For evidence-based checklists to guide these visits and further information on broader health issues in this population, please see below.

Additional resources:

1. <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/refugee.aspx>
2. <http://www.cmaj.ca/site/misc/caring-for-a-newly-arrived-syrian-refugee-family-cmaj.151422.xhtml>
3. http://www.cfpc.ca/Refugee_Health_Care/
4. http://www.ccirhken.ca/ccirh/checklist_website/index.html (Adult checklist)
5. <http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/e-checklist/initial-assessment> (Pediatric checklist)

This letter can also be found on the AHS website at: www.albertahealthservices.ca/medstaff/Page7082.aspx

We are, as always, indebted to our primary care colleagues for their excellent work in the front lines of health care, and we look forward to continuing to work together to serve this special population.

Sincerely,

Zone Lead Medical Officers of Health