

Memorandum

November 7, 2025

Emergency Department Memo: Tuberculosis Outbreak

An active Tuberculosis (TB) outbreak has been declared in Edmonton's inner-city. Case finding and contact management are important steps in managing this outbreak.

Case finding

In patients who are experiencing houselessness, and present with a cough for >2 weeks, please test active TB with both a **plain chest radiograph and sputum samples**:

- Collect **three** sputum samples for mycobacteria (AFB, TB). Please note that this is a different order than is used for sputum for routine culture and sensitivity. If the patient is unable to produce sputum despite coaching, please consult Respiratory Therapy (RT) and arrange one induced sputum sample for mycobacterial culture. Please include **EI# 2025-996**.
- In the hospital setting, airborne isolation is recommended for all patients under evaluation for active TB. Thus, sputum collection should be done under airborne precautions.
- If suspicion for active TB is low (based on clinical presentation, chest radiograph, sputum AFB smear or PCR), patients can be discharged back into the community without isolation pending sputum culture results which often take several days to result. There is a TB physician on-call 24/7 who can help risk stratify.

****Please note:** if TB is cultured from sputum samples, the TB program is automatically notified and will arrange follow-up with the patient emergently, even if they have been discharged. Abnormal chest radiographs and non-TB organisms found in the sputum will not be automatically followed by the TB program.

Contact management

Contact investigation and management are underway. Please be aware that for known contacts who have yet to be reached, exceptional care plans will be flagged in Connect Care charts. If flagged as TB contact, we ask that you collect:

- QuantiFERON (QFT): For known contacts, QFT orders are already entered into Connect Care. If this requisition is used, the results of QFT are forwarded to Dr. Cooper and will be followed up by public health.
- If the patient has a persistent cough raising the possibility of active TB, a chest radiograph and three sputum samples should also be arranged (see above).
- If active TB is suspected, please notify the TB Services Nurse on Call urgently (780-407-4550) to arrange a referral and follow-up. For after-hours, call the TB physician on call through the switchboard at 780-407-8822.

Anyone with questions or concerns can contact the Edmonton TB clinic at 780-407-4550. This outbreak is not considered a risk to the general public at this time. Please adhere to standard infection prevention protocols at your facility.