



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RECRUDESCENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS CASES IN NUNAVIK

Kuujuuaq, May 9, 2012 – The Department of Public Health (DPH) of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) wishes to inform the Nunavik population of a recrudescence of contagious tuberculosis cases within certain communities of the region. In very close collaboration with the personnel of the Ungava Tulattavik Health Centre and the Inuulitsivik Health Centre, all efforts have been deployed in order to ensure rapid diagnosis and appropriate treatment of cases of active tuberculosis as well individuals who came into contact with those cases.

Even though the situation appears to be relatively well under control, with the exception of a single community, it is important to remain vigilant. The control of tuberculosis can only be effectively ensured with the collaboration of the affected communities. The existence of houses in which gambling and drug sharing occur (gathering houses), where several individuals spend long hours in overcrowded and poorly ventilated environments, constitutes a major risk for the transmission of tuberculosis. Young persons are often affected, and they tend to delay consulting at the CLSC, in spite of symptoms that suggest tuberculosis.

Several communication and prevention activities will be deployed to inform *Nunavimmiut* of the precautions and actions to take to avoid contracting the disease. The Nunavik DPH will require the collaboration of the entire population to identify any clinical situation that might represent a case of active, contagious tuberculosis and apply control measures without delay, thus limiting the risks of transmission.

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis is a contagious disease caused by a microbe, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The microbe most often establishes itself in the lungs, but other organs such as the ganglions, kidneys and bones can also be affected. Tuberculosis can develop rapidly after initial contact with the microbe, just as it can manifest several years later.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms most indicative of tuberculosis are the following: an important cough that persists for more than three weeks, often accompanied by expectoration, fever, great fatigue, loss of appetite, night sweats and weight loss.

How does an individual get infected with tuberculosis?

When an individual with contagious pulmonary tuberculosis coughs or sneezes, he or she projects microbes into the air. When another individual inhales those microbes, he or she can be infected in turn.

Who are most at risk of getting infected with tuberculosis?

The individuals most at risk are those in close and prolonged contact with a sick person who is contagious, i.e., domestic and other intimate contacts. The most vulnerable are children, elderly persons and those whose physical resistance is compromised by other diseases or by their lifestyle.

Once infected, will an individual develop active tuberculosis?

The majority of individuals infected by the microbe will not develop the disease. The risk of developing the disease is greater among:

- young children and adolescents;
- individuals whose physical resistance is compromised by:
 - an important disease such as diabetes, HIV infection or cancer, or a form of treatment that weakens the immune system;
 - their lifestyle, such as alcoholism, substance abuse, poor nutrition.

Is there a treatment for tuberculosis?

Yes, and it is essential. When the medication is taken as prescribed, tuberculosis will heal and become non-contagious. The patient will thus avoid serious complications, besides protecting his or her loved ones. Note that in Québec, tuberculosis is a disease subject to obligatory treatment. It is treated with several medications (generally from two to four different types) that must be taken regularly for a period of 6 to 12 months. Thanks to the effectiveness of the medications used, the contagiousity of cases generally diminishes rapidly.

Nunavimmiut may contact their CLSC for additional information.

*The NRBHSS is a public agency created in 1978 under the **James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement**. It is responsible for nearly the entire Québec territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.*

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This communiqué is also posted on our Web site at www.rrss17.gouv.qc.ca.