October 8, 2015

Update on Tuberculosis Cases in the Labrador-Grenfell Health region

- The Labrador-Grenfell Health region has seen a large number of tuberculosis (TB) cases – 5 in 2014; 25 in 2015.
- Labrador-Grenfell Health, in partnership with Nunatsiavut and the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province, is continuing to follow-up and investigate individuals for tuberculosis.
- There are two separate clusters or outbreaks in the region: Nain and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The most recent confirmed cases were reported in August 2015 (Nain) and July 2015 (Happy Valley-Goose Bay).
- The majority of confirmed TB cases in Nain are linked epidemiologically to cases that were identified in October. The majority of confirmed TB cases in Happy Valley Goose Bay are linked epidemiologically to cases that were identified in December, 2014.

Management of the outbreaks

- The management of TB cases and contacts continues to be coordinated through a team approach involving the Nunatsiavut Government, Labrador-Grenfell Health, the Department of Health and Community Services and the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province.
- Efforts by Nunatsiavut and Labrador-Grenfell Health to manage the outbreak in Nain is concentrated on the individuals who are confirmed of having the TB disease and identifying the close contacts of those individuals, a process called contact tracing. As of this date, almost 800 contacts in Nain and Happy Valley-Goose Bay have been investigated to date.
- Contacts are closely followed over an extended period of time.

What’s happening

- Nursing staff with Labrador-Grenfell Health and Nunatsiavut Public Health took part in education sessions at Happy Valley-Goose Bay on Sept. 22 and 23, 2015. The sessions focused on communicable disease control and outbreak management and were
coordinated and delivered by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada.

- Public Health Nurses with the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development are providing public health follow-up in Nain, and Public Health Nurses with Labrador-Grenfell Health are providing public health follow-up in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, guided by Labrador-Grenfell Health's Communicable Control Disease Nurse and the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Nain residents who have a concern or a question about their health can call the clinic at 922-2912 to make an appointment.
- Residents of Happy Valley Goose Bay who have a concern or a question can schedule an appointment with their family physician or contact a Public Health Nurse by calling 897-2331.
- Regular TB clinics are held at the Labrador Health Centre, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, involving a physician and the Communicable Disease Control Nurse.
- A TB Outbreak Team, comprised of representatives from Labrador-Grenfell Health, Nunatsiavut, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the Provincial Government meet regularly to assess developments in the TB outbreaks.

Health risks associated with sharing cigarettes and smoking devices

- Efforts are under way to educate the public, particularly young people, about the risk associated with sharing cigarettes and the importance of practicing good hygiene and maintaining a healthy diet.
- The practice of sharing cigarettes or smoking devices such as pipes can place someone at risk for contracting a variety of communicable diseases, including TB.
- Labrador-Grenfell Health and Nunatsiavut Public Health strongly urge individuals to refrain from sharing of cigarettes, illicit drugs and smoking devices.

What the public needs to know

- If you are sick or feel unwell, and have any of the following symptoms: fever, night sweats, cough, weight loss, go directly to your local health care facility.
- If you have been identified as a contact of someone who is sick, you will be contacted by a public health nurse. A contact can be a family member or a close friend. If you’re contacted by your public health nurse, it’s important for you to work with your health care providers.
- If you feel you might be a contact of someone who is sick with TB, you can contact your local Public Health Nurse.
• TB is a bacterial infection and it has been eradicated in most places in Canada, but it continues to pose challenges in some northern communities.
• Treatment and taking all of the medication as prescribed is the best way to eradicate the TB bacteria.