



News Release

Tuberculosis Rates in Nunavut

IQALUIT, Nunavut (March 11, 2010) – In Nunavut, there has been no significant increase in the rates of tuberculosis in the past decade. While rates of tuberculosis have continued to be higher than the national average, 54 cases were reported in 2009, which was a slight decline from the 58 cases in the previous year.

The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to protecting Nunavummiut from tuberculosis with its prevention, treatment and surveillance programs.

The Government of Nunavut has a successful tuberculosis program in place that meets or exceeds Canadian standards. “98% of tuberculosis patients in Nunavut complete treatment compared to the 92% of patients that complete treatment nationally,” said Dr. Sobol, Nunavut’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. “The territory’s rates of relapse and drug resistance are also well within the national standards.”

There are many contributing factors to high rates of tuberculosis in Nunavut. Unlike the majority of Canadians, Nunavut’s population has not experienced multi-generational exposure to tuberculosis. As a result, there is not the same level of natural resistance as there is elsewhere in Canada.

Another significant difference between Nunavut and other parts of Canada is the prevalence of overcrowded housing, poverty and smoking, as well as limited access to affordable, healthy food. The Department is continuing to address these social determinants of health in the programs and services that it offers.

All Nunavummiut are encouraged to eat a healthy diet, avoid smoking, and report symptoms of illness to their local health centre or public health office. Symptoms of tuberculosis include: chest pain, coughing up blood or sputum, a cough that lasts longer than three weeks, weakness, fatigue, and night sweats.

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