What does a worker do when he/she is concerned (s)he may have been exposed to a communicable disease?

When a worker is concerned they have been exposed to a reportable communicable disease, the worker shall inform the supervisor or senior management immediately. The supervisor/senior managers will notify OHS. The supervisor or senior management shall advise the worker to schedule an appointment with a physician immediately to obtain a doctor’s note indicating that the individual is not infectious. The doctor’s note must be provided to OHS who will inform the supervisor/senior managers upon receipt of the note. OHS will facilitate any communications deemed necessary with the supervisor/senior managers and Human Resources.

Is there any threat to other workers when a person believes they have been exposed to a reportable, communicable disease?

It is important to obtain the facts first before responding. Ontario has a system in place to protect all Ontarians from exposure to communicable diseases of concern to the public. It is therefore important to use that system to prevent any miscommunications. The system starts with a physician who will make the diagnosis and report confirmed cases to Toronto Public Health (TPH). TPH is responsible for informing individuals if an exposure to a confirmed case may have occurred and will provide instructions to all affected individuals. If York is impacted we will also be contacted by TPH and follow their instructions. Therefore individual claims of an exposure will always be taken seriously, but does not require any action other than following the OHS recommendation described above. By prompting a doctor’s visit, we make use of the system already in place to protect everyone.

Should a person stay home until they provide a doctor’s note?

The worker will be told to visit the doctor right away. If the person has already arrived at the workplace, have them visit a nearby walk-in clinic to remove any concern of immediate exposure to others, and to minimize time away from work. If a person is exhibiting symptoms of a communicable disease (reportable or not), then it is recommended that they stay home until they are well enough to return to work. Again, if a reportable communicable disease is suspected by the individual they need to see a doctor. They will then need to bring a doctor’s note to OHS before reporting to work.

Key points to remember…

- OHS operates under the guidance and recommendations provided by Toronto Public Health and the OHS medical consultant.
- Systems are in place to control reportable communicable diseases in Ontario.
  - Only a physician is qualified to diagnose whether or not an individual has a communicable disease and will determine whether or not it is reportable. Once the physician has confirmed a case he or she is legally required under the Health Protection and Promotion Act to report the disease to the local Health Unit.
Local Health Units are responsible for monitoring the health of the community and to provide the basis for preventive action.

- Supervisors may contact OHS and/or Toronto Public Health (TPH) directly at any time for supplemental information or for assistance.

**Supplemental Information**

**Communicable Diseases: Reportable vs. Non-Reportable Cases**

**What are communicable diseases?**

Communicable diseases are illnesses that can be spread (or communicated) from one person to another. Some communicable diseases may have a serious impact on public health, and therefore must be identified quickly to provide care to the individual and prevent it from spreading.

**What are reportable communicable diseases?**

Certain communicable diseases have been identified as potentially having a serious impact on the community and must therefore be reported to Toronto Public Health (TPH). These are called reportable communicable diseases.

**How are reportable communicable diseases identified and prevented from spreading?**

A physician will diagnose the disease and report the findings to the local Health Unit as required under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Once reported, the local Health Unit will lead any monitoring efforts to prevent its spread. Examples of reportable and non-reportable communicable diseases are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reportable Communicable Diseases</th>
<th>Non-Reportable Communicable Diseases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>Most causes of pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickenpox (Varicella)</td>
<td>Common cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
<td>Pink eye (conjunctivitis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A complete list of reportable communicable diseases is available at: [www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/communicable_disease_surveillance/list_disease.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/communicable_disease_surveillance/list_disease.htm)

**Contacts for Communicable Disease Inquires/Concerns**

**Toronto Public Health**

- Call 311 or
- TPH Call Center 416-338-7600
- www.toronto.ca/health/

**York University**

- Francis Arnaldo, Biosafety Officer
- Occupational Health & Safety, Department of Human Resources
- Kinsmen Building
- Tel: 416-736-2100 x44745

OHS guidelines are available at: [http://www.yorku.ca/dohs/programs.html](http://www.yorku.ca/dohs/programs.html)