

WHAT IS NTM?

Nontuberculous mycobacteria, (NTM), are bacteria found in water, soil and dust. There are almost 200 species of NTM bacteria.

Most do not cause disease except in people with a weakened immune system.

You get an NTM infection when you ingest or breathe in the bacteria from misty water (for example, in a shower or hot tub) or from soil.

WHO GETS NTM?

NTM can affect anyone, but some people are at increased risk:

People with lung disorders like asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, & bronchiectasis.

Slim peri or post menopausal women.

Smokers and ex-smokers.

Anyone with immunity issues and/or an autoimmune disease.

NTM lung disease is more common in older adults but can affect any age group.

SYMPTOMS

People with NTM generally have some or all of these symptoms:

Cough

Fatigue

Night sweats

Fever

Weight loss and loss of appetite

Shortness of breath

Coughing up blood

Excessive mucus production

Wheezing

Chest pain

Recurring respiratory infections



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NTM organisms can be found in your everyday environment.

The global incidence of NTM infection is on the rise.

8% is the average observed growth rate for NTM each year.



Most NTM species do not cause infections in humans, but a few NTM species do, including:

Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)

Mycobacterium avium

Mycobacterium intracellulare

Mycobacterium abscessus

Mycobacterium kansasii

Mycobacterium xenopi

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This information is intended as a guide only and not a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment. Always consult with your doctor about matters that affect your health.

SUSPECT NTM?

Talk to your General Practitioner. NTM is diagnosed when patients meet established clinical criteria.

Chest CT scan is often required.

Sputum AFB testing is essential. A bronchoscopy may be needed to get samples.



SOURCES OF

Gardening - potting mix/garden soil.

Household water taps.

Showers.

Spa baths, steam rooms and indoor pools.

Dust exposure - household/vacuum cleaner dust.

PREVENTION

Replace shower heads regularly. Set hot water storage to 70 degrees Celsius (use caution).

Ensure adequate bathroom ventilation.

Take baths instead of showers.

Always wear a mask when gardening.

