NONTUBERCULOUS MYCOBACTERIA

What Is Nontuberculous Mycobacteria?

Nontuberculous Mycobacteria or simply NTM, are naturally occurring organisms found in soil and water. It is when these organisms are inhaled in a susceptible person that infection may result.

What Might I Notice If I Have NTM?

Symptoms will vary with patients, but this list includes many common signs and symptoms:

- Lingering cough
- Coughing up blood
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Night sweat
- Unexplained weight loss
- Recurrent respiratory infections

How Is NTM Treated?

If a chronic NTM infection is diagnosed, it is important to begin treatment right away. There are two mycobacteria species that cause NTM. Your doctor will perform tests to determine which subtype you have, so that the right treatment will be chosen.

- MAC and M.kansaii are the most common and will require a regimen with at least three antibiotics to be taken together.
- M. abscessus is less common, but much more serious; patients with this subtype will require several months of therapy with a combination of IV, oral, and inhaled antibiotics to clear the infection
- Surgery – some patients will require a surgical procedure to remove very damaged areas of the lung

Tips For Managing NTM

- The treatment course is very long and reinfection remains a possibility, it is important to seek support to avoid feeling depressed and isolated
- Fatigue is common, so it is important to ensure you get enough rest and don’t overexert yourself
- Continue to take your antibiotics and other respiratory treatments as ordered, and contact your doctor with any side effect concerns you may have.

Support Group Information

You can find more information on NTM at these websites

- CHEST Foundation at https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-resources/nontuberculous-mycobacteria-ntm/
• National Organization for Rare Disorders at https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/nontuberculous-mycobacterial-lung-disease/