Infectious Disease

Nontuberculous mycobacterium
(a.k.a. atypical mycobacterium, MAC or mycobacterium other than tuberculosis)

WHAT IS NONTUBERCULOUS MYCOBACTERIUM? Mycobacteria are a large group of bacteria which can cause disease in humans. *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is a contagious disease which can cause serious pulmonary as well as other types of diseases and will not be discussed here. For more information on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* please see [http://www.cdc.gov/tb/](http://www.cdc.gov/tb/)

Non tuberculous mycobacterium (NTM) is a group within the *Mycobacterium* family which includes all the other mycobacteria which can cause pulmonary disease, skin disease, lymphadenitis or disseminated disease. These include *mycobacterium avian complex* (MAC) which consists of *M. avium* and *M. intracellulare, M. abscessus, M. chelonae,* and *M. fortuitum;* and less common strains such as *M. kansasii* and *M. xenopi."

WHAT IS NTM CAUSED BY? NTM is not generally contagious and is contracted from the environment. Risk factors for contracting NTM are female sex, age greater than 50, thin, history of smoking or other lung diseases such as COPD, bronchiectasis or cystic fibrosis.

WHAT ARE SOME SYMPTOMS OF NTM? Symptoms of NTM infection include cough, coughing up blood, fever, chills, night sweats, bronchitis or pneumonia and fatigue.

HOW IS NTM DIAGNOSED? Diagnosis of NTM usually requires a chest x-ray or CT scan of the chest and sputum culture in which the organism grows. In some cases a bronchoscopy (a fiberoptic camera inserted into the lung via the nose or mouth) may be used in diagnosis.

HOW IS NTM TREATED? NTM becomes resistant to antibiotics easily and for this reason, treatment is with several antibacterial agents. Usually at least 3 drugs will be needed and treatment is long-term for at least one year.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT ON MY FIRST VISIT TO P.C.C.S? Chest x-ray and lab work will be done. A medical history and physical exam will be performed. Pulmonary function testing may be done. Follow up testing such as C.T. of the chest (if not done already) and bronchoscopy may be required prior to initiation of treatment.

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For more information, visit [Pulmonary Critical Care & Sleep Medicine Consultants online at HoustonLungDocs.com](http://www.HoustonLungDocs.com)  
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