Nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) are naturally-occurring organisms (germs) found throughout nature in water and soil. There are more than 150 different species of NTM, most of which do not seem to cause human disease except in individuals with weak lungs or immune systems. People who are susceptible inhale the organisms from misty water (like in a shower or hot tub) or from the soil, which leads to lung infections. Over time, these lung infections become slowly progressive, which can destroy lung tissue and lead to other, more serious lung conditions.

**Common Symptoms**
- Cough
- Fever
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Excessive mucus production
- Wheezing
- Chest pain
- Recurring respiratory infections

**Risk Factors**
- **Age:** It’s more common in older adults
- **Lung Disease:** It’s more common in people with other lung conditions, like COPD
- **Genetic Diseases:** Like cystic fibrosis and alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency
- **Illnesses that weaken the immune system:** Like Sjogren’s disease and rheumatoid arthritis
- **Some medications:** Like those used to treat rheumatoid arthritis or Crohn’s disease
- **Acid reflux (GERD)**

50,000 to 90,000 people in the US have NTM lung disease.

8% is the average expected growth rate for new cases of NTM each year.

94% of people diagnosed with NTM lung disease have some other form of chronic lung infection.

12,000 to 18,000 new cases of NTM lung infection are diagnosed each year in the US.

To learn more, go to [www.chestfoundation.org/NTM](http://www.chestfoundation.org/NTM)

Read the CHEST Foundation Patient Education Disclosure at [https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-disclosure/](https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-disclosure/)