



NUMBER: 23-02
FOR RELEASE: Immediate

Date: March 24, 2023
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Public Health Reminds the Community the Importance of TB Prevention and Treatment

In observance of "World Tuberculosis Day," the Stanislaus County Public Health Tuberculosis (TB) Control program encourages at-risk residents to get tested for early TB diagnosis. World TB Day, held on March 24 each year, is an occasion to raise awareness about TB's devastating health and economic consequences and gather support for TB prevention and control activities. TB is not an illness from the past. While it is usually curable with proper medical care, TB remains one of the deadliest diseases, killing over 1.6 million people globally every year, including around 600 in the United States.

In 2022, Stanislaus County saw 15 new cases of active TB disease, compared to 10 in 2021. The number of active TB cases is only the tip of the iceberg. For every person with active TB disease, many more will have latent TB infection (LTBI). People with LTBI do not have any current symptoms and are not infectious, but the infection can progress to active TB disease if not treated. Active pulmonary TB disease is infectious and spreads person-to-person through the air.

"World TB Day serves as a reminder of the need for continued vigilance against TB," says Dr. Thea Papasozomenos, Stanislaus County Public Health Officer. "Since people with LTBI do not have symptoms, many people diagnosed with LTBI, unfortunately, are not interested in initiating treatment. The treatment of LTBI is vitally important for TB control. In California, 86% of our active TB cases were from the progression of LTBI."

To prevent TB spread in our communities, in addition to treating people with active TB disease, we must promote screening and treatment of persons with LTBI, especially those at high risk of developing active TB disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the following people are considered at increased risk for TB infection and should be tested:

- People who have spent time with someone who has TB disease;
- People from a country where TB disease is common (e.g., Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands);
- People who live or work in high-risk settings (e.g., correctional facilities, homeless shelters, long-term care facilities);
- Healthcare workers who care for patients at increased risk for TB disease;
- Infants, children, and adolescents exposed to adults are at increased risk for LTBI or TB disease.

Treatment of LTBI decreases the risk of progression to active TB disease by 60-90%. It is also important that people getting treated for LTBI or TB disease follow their healthcare provider's recommendations and complete the entire course of treatment, as this increases the likelihood of successful treatment and prevents the development of drug resistance to TB medications.

To learn more about tuberculosis, please visit [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Tuberculosis education page](#).

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