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CONTACT: Kamlesh Kaur
PHONE: 209.558.6833

Public Health Stresses the Importance of Early TB Detection and Preventive Treatment on World TB Day

In observance of World Tuberculosis Day, Stanislaus County Public Health encourages at-risk residents to get tested for early diagnosis of tuberculosis (TB). World TB Day, held on March 24 each year, raises awareness about the devastating health and economic consequences of TB and gathers support for prevention and control activities. TB remains one of the deadliest diseases, killing an estimated 1.25 million people globally every year, including around 600 people in the United States and around 200 people in California.

In 2024, California had 2100 new cases of active TB disease. This represents nearly double the total US rate of newly diagnosed active TB cases by population. Stanislaus County reported 13 new cases of active TB disease in 2024, ranking 31st among all California counties for new TB cases per population, compared to 9 active TB cases in 2023.

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 from person to person through the air. Treatment of latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) is 90% effective in preventing progression to active tuberculosis disease. In California, 83% of active TB cases were attributable to the progression of LTBI.

"World TB Day serves as a reminder of the need for continued vigilance against TB," says Dr. Thea Papasozomenos, Stanislaus County Public Health Officer. "Testing and treatment for LTBI are vitally important for TB control as most active TB disease cases could have been prevented with testing and treatment for LTBI."

More than 2 million Californians are estimated to be infected with TB; approximately 20% have been tested and are aware they have TB infection, and only 13% have been treated.

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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 California Department of Public Health (CDPH) TB risk assessment tool, the following people are considered at increased risk for TB infection (or developing active TB disease once infected) and should be tested:

- Were born in, reside for at least a month, or frequently travel to countries where TB is common, including some countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America
- Live or used to live in large group settings where TB is more common, such as homeless shelters, prisons, or jails
- Have spent time with someone who has active TB disease
- Those with immunosuppression, current or planned

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 to prevent drug resistance.

New Law: AB 2132 Strengthens TB Prevention Efforts in California

As of January 1, 2025, Assembly Bill (AB) 2132 has taken effect in California, enhancing the state's TB prevention measures. The new law requires all adult patients receiving primary care services to be offered a TB screening test if risk factors are identified. "Since people with LTBI do not have symptoms, they usually do not seek out testing on their own to determine if they have TB infection. We encourage residents to take advantage of the expanded TB risk assessment and screening requirements for primary care settings afforded under the new CA law to protect themselves and their communities from TB," added Dr. Papasozomenos. For more information on tuberculosis, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Tuberculosis education page](#).

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