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AUG 24 2017

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**Press Release No. 2017-071
 Concerns About Tuberculosis**

The Department of Public Health and Social Services continues to receive calls from individuals in the community who are concerned about getting tuberculosis (TB), because of the current efforts to screen babies identified as contacts to the active case of tuberculosis diagnosed in an employee of GMH who worked in the Nursery.

What is TB

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria called Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The bacteria usually attack the lungs. But they can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. People with TB disease can be treated if they seek medical help. Most people with latent TB infection can take medicine so that they will not develop TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

How is TB Spread

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are released into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.



When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. From there, they can move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

TB disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. This means that the bacteria can be spread to other people. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious.

People with TB disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day. This includes family members, friends, and coworkers or schoolmates.

What is TB Disease



In most people who breathe in TB bacteria and become infected, the body can fight the bacteria to stop it from growing. The bacteria become inactive, but it remains alive in the body and can become active later.

This is called latent TB infection. People with latent TB infection:

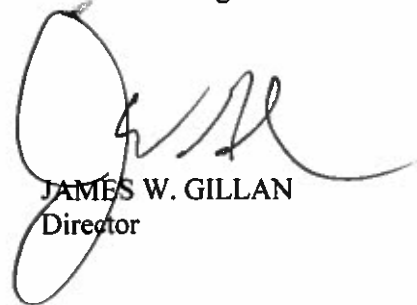
- Have no symptoms
- Don't feel sick
- Can't spread TB bacteria to others
- Usually have a positive skin test reaction
- May develop TB disease if they do not receive treatment for latent TB infection

Many people who have latent TB infection never develop TB disease. In these people, the TB bacteria remain inactive for a lifetime without causing disease. But in other people, especially people who have weak immune systems, the bacteria become active, multiply, and cause TB disease.

The Difference Between Latent TB Infection and TB Disease

A Person with Latent TB Infection	A Person with TB Disease
Does not feel sick	Usually feels sick
Has no symptoms	Has symptoms that may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer • pain in the chest • coughing up blood or sputum • weakness or fatigue • weight loss • no appetite • chills • fever • sweating at night
Cannot spread TB bacteria to others	May spread TB bacteria to others
Usually has a positive TB skin test	Usually has a positive TB skin test
Has a normal chest x-ray and a negative sputum smear	May have an abnormal chest x-ray, or positive sputum smear or culture
Should consider treatment for latent TB infection to prevent TB disease	Needs treatment for TB disease

For general information on TB, please call the TB Control Program at 735-7131/7145 or go to www.cdc.gov/tb.



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