

For Immediate Release

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Tuberculosis can affect anyone *“Think TB” so we can end TB*

YPSILANTI, Mich., March 27, 2018 – To honor World TB Day, which took place Saturday, the Washtenaw County Health Department is reminding residents that TB (tuberculosis) can affect anyone.

“Even though it is curable and preventable, TB kills more people than any other infectious disease in the world, surpassing HIV and malaria.” says Mary McCloud, TB nurse coordinator at the Washtenaw County Health Department. “Anyone can get TB. It is in every country and in every state in the United States.”

Washtenaw County resident Laurel recently learned this lesson. Her son was diagnosed with TB disease last year. He likely picked up TB bacteria while traveling in Europe as a child. At the time, he had no symptoms and could not spread TB to others, which is known as latent TB infection.

Up to 13 million people in the United States are estimated to have latent TB infection. TB infection can progress into active TB disease if these bacteria become active and multiply. TB infection and TB disease are both curable once diagnosed.

Laurel's son's TB disease initially showed up in his ear two years ago. However, he was not diagnosed with TB for over a year because he was not showing the most common symptoms and did not meet common risk factors of TB. Under the care of health department nurses and TB consultants, Laurel's son is expected to be fully cured of TB after nine months of treatment.

“Our saga illustrates that anyone, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, can become infected by TB,” Laurel said. “We are truly fortunate to have an outstanding public health department and TB program here in Washtenaw County.”

The case rate of active TB disease in Washtenaw County was 2.2 per 100,000 people in 2017, compared to 1.3 statewide.

“To end TB in our community, it is essential for both residents and health care providers to ‘think TB,’” says McCloud. “One out of every three people throughout the world are infected with the TB germ. I urge every person to discuss their risk for TB infection with their health care provider.”

People who should get a simple TB skin or blood test include:

- People who are from, or who travel to, a country where TB disease is common
- People who have spent time with someone who has TB disease
- People who have underlying health conditions that compromise their immune system

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Since TB can attack any part of the body, it is also important for health care providers to “think TB,” even if common symptoms related to the lungs are not present.

“We are sharing the Washtenaw County Health Department’s algorithm on the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of latent tuberculosis infections for HIV-negative adults as a resource for our local primary care providers. Strengthening the public health-primary care linkage will help the fight to end TB,” says Jessie Kimbrough Marshall, MD, MPH, medical director of the Washtenaw County Health Department. Providers can find the health department’s TB infection protocol at bit.ly/LTBprotocol.

Anyone with questions about TB can call the health department at 734-544-6700.

About TB

TB is caused by TB bacteria. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. TB can be spread from person to person in the air. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

TB Symptoms

Symptoms of TB disease in the lungs may include:

- A bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- Pain in the chest
- Coughing up blood or phlegm

Other symptoms of TB disease are:

- Weakness or fatigue
- Weight loss
- No appetite
- Chills
- Fever
- Sweating at night

Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected.

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org> or call 734-544-6700.

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