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Taney County Health Department



Public Health
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 24-World TB Day

Tuberculosis (TB) rarely crosses the minds of most Americans, probably because of the fact that the disease has been declining in the United States and Missouri. In 2008, 107 TB disease cases were reported in Missouri as compared to 118 in 2007. However, there were 3,573 latent TB infections (LTBI) reported in Missouri in 2008 as compared to 3,618 in 2007. TB is one of the world's deadliest diseases: one third of the world's population is infected with TB; each year, nearly 9 million people around the world become sick with TB; each year there are almost 2 million TB-related deaths worldwide. March 24 is set aside as World TB Day to educate the public about TB.

In 2008, Taney County reported no TB disease and 24 LTBI cases. During 2009, one TB disease and 18 LTBI cases were reported in Taney County. The Taney County Health Department offers TB testing as well as case management and treatment for those individuals who test positive for TB.

It is important to describe the difference between TB disease and latent TB infection. TB, or tuberculosis, is a disease caused by bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria can attack any part of your body, but they usually attack the lungs. TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are expelled into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. People who become infected with TB bacteria, usually have had very close, day-to-day, contact with someone who has TB disease (e.g. a family member, friend, or close co-worker). You are not likely to be infected from someone coughing in line at a supermarket or at a restaurant. TB cannot be spread through eating or drinking after someone or touching someone.

In most people who become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria and stop them from growing. The bacteria become inactive, but they remain alive in the body and can become active later. This is called latent TB infection. People with latent TB infection do not have symptoms or feel sick, nor are they able to spread the disease to others. They usually have a positive TB skin test and can develop TB disease later in life if they do not receive treatment for LTBI. 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. However, in other people, especially people who have weak immune systems, the bacteria become active and cause TB disease. People with LTBI can take medicine to help prevent TB disease from developing.

Symptoms of TB disease depend on where in the body the TB bacteria are growing. TB bacteria usually grow in the lungs and may cause a bad cough that lasts longer than two weeks, chest pain, and coughing up blood or sputum. Other symptoms include weakness or fatigue, weight loss, lack of appetite, chills, fever and sweating at night.

Please contact your doctor or the Taney County Health Department at (417) 546-4725 or (417) 334-4544 or visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org if you have questions about latent TB infection or TB disease.

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