



DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.



## Public Health Advisory

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### Tuberculosis (TB) Cluster in Marin County

The purpose of this advisory is to inform you that in mid-May a cluster of TB cases was reported in Marin County. Three linked cases have been identified, and a comprehensive contact investigation is ongoing to identify and test persons who may have been exposed to these individuals while they were infectious.

#### Guidance for clinicians

Please consider TB in your differential diagnosis in patients with compatible symptoms (see below). While the current cluster appears to be among individuals originally from Central America, clinicians should evaluate anyone with compatible symptoms or anyone who may have come into contact with a known TB patient.

This cluster is an important reminder to continue to screen for TB in patients within established risk groups (See "Who to test for TB" list below.) Consider the TB Skin Test or IGRA testing and chest X-ray (see details in the resources listed on page 2.)

#### *Compatible symptoms*

Cough, fever, fatigue, night sweats, and unexplained weight loss are common symptoms associated with pulmonary tuberculosis. In most cases, cough is initially non-productive and may later be accompanied by purulent sputum. Hemoptysis and hoarseness are sometimes prominent in advanced stages. Chest radiography may reveal pulmonary infiltrates, often in the upper lobes. Cavitation may occur in more advanced disease.

#### *Who to test for TB*

- Persons with ongoing or prolonged contact to someone who has infectious TB
- Persons with HIV infection or other immunosuppressive conditions
- Persons with symptoms consistent with TB infection
- Persons from a country with a high incidence of TB (most countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia)
- U.S. residents who live or work in an area where TB disease is more common (e.g. homeless shelters, prisons)
- Persons with a history of substance abuse

**Infection control**

TB is spread via airborne transmission. Transmission risk is higher when cases are coughing or sneezing. Patients with weakened immune systems, including people with diabetes and children under five years are at greater risk of developing active disease once infected.

If you suspect a patient is infectious with TB, immediately isolate the patient in accordance with your facility's infection control plan. The patient should don a surgical mask and providers should be equipped with N95 respirators for which they have been fit-tested.

**Resources for additional information**

1. California TB Controllers Association guidelines <http://www.ctca.org/>
2. Controlling Tuberculosis in the United States <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5412.pdf>
3. Guidelines for the Investigation of Contacts of Persons with Infectious Tuberculosis <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5415.pdf>
4. CDC website for TB Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/tb>

**Reporting requirements and contact information**

California law requires the reporting of diseases and conditions, including suspected and confirmed TB, to your local public health department (Title 17, CCR 2500 et seq.). A suspect case of TB is a person whom a health care provider believes may have TB after considering signs, symptoms, and/or laboratory evidence.

Federal HIPAA privacy rules allow disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

Please call the Marin County Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Program at 415-473-4163 or the TB Program at 415-473-6862 to report suspect cases or for guidance concerning evaluation or response to any suspected TB patients.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Willis, MD, MPH  
Public Health Officer