

March 21, 2014



Everyone has a role in controlling the spread of Tuberculosis (TB)

SARASOTA COUNTY — The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) will join in the World TB Day observance on Monday, March 24. The World Health Organization (WHO) theme “Find TB, Treat TB, Working together to eliminate TB” is meant to engage people everywhere in the global fight against TB.

The focus is on celebrating the lives and stories of people who have been cured of TB as well as the nurses, doctors, researchers and public health staff who work daily to stop the spread of TB in the community.

Everyone is encouraged to learn more about TB which affects nearly 9 million people. Worldwide there were 1.4 million TB related deaths reported. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) names four states that make up 50 percent of TB cases in the United States: Florida, California, Texas and New York.



Anyone can get TB disease. However, those with increased risk of getting TB include those living with diabetes, compromised immune systems—HIV infection, the homeless, as well as people who live in overcrowded conditions and residents who emigrated from countries where TB is common.

Public Health officials who routinely follow TB disease report that risk occurs when there is prolonged contact with a contagious person in a poorly ventilated area. TB is spread through the air from one person to another, usually when a person with active-TB disease coughs or sneezes, in such conditions. People may breathe in these bacteria and develop latent- or dormant-TB infection. There are an estimated 10 – 15 million Americans infected with the TB bacteria, with the potential to develop active-TB disease in the future.

There are medications that can prevent latent-TB infection (LTBI) from progressing to active-TB disease, as well as cure people who are sick with the disease. Perhaps the most important measure to control TB is one of the simplest - Directly Observed Therapy (DOT). DOT uses trained personnel who meet with people with TB and observe them taking their medication for the duration of treatment, which can extend six months or longer. DOT is extremely cost-effective in that it does not require hospitalization.

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DOH-Sarasota's Disease Intervention Services Unit provides case management, including investigation of those who have had contact with individuals with TB who reside in Sarasota County. In addition, evaluation and treatment for LTBI is offered. To raise awareness, TB information will be displayed in the lobby of the William L. Little Health & Human Services Center, 2200 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota.

Although the number of people affected with TB has declined throughout Florida, public health officials agree that vigilant monitoring and treatment must continue. Only then will people see the real progress in the fight against TB.

More information on TB:

Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County: 941-861-2873; www.sarasotahealth.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/
CDC Link to personal stories: <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/personalstories.htm>

-30-

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MEDIA NOTES:

A fact sheet on TB including local trend data is available upon request.

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