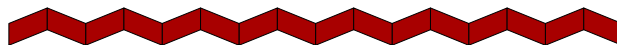




TUBERCULOSIS (TB)



Safety & Security Fact Sheet

- ✓ **STATUS OF THE PROBLEM.** The TB case rate in Fairfax County has increased slightly over the past two years and it is anticipated the rate will remain fairly steady over the next five years.
- ✓ **WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?** Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection of the lungs that causes cough, fatigue, weight loss, swollen glands, and fever. This is an **active** infection. The infection may also be **inactive**. Persons with inactive infections are not sick and **cannot** spread the disease.
- ✓ **ISN'T TB SPREAD THROUGH THE AIR?** Yes. A person infected with TB **and who has the symptoms** will release infectious bacteria in the air while coughing, sneezing, laughing, or singing. However, transmission of the infection is not likely to occur through casual contact in school hallways. Family members and close friends of the person with active TB are at greatest risk. TB **cannot** be spread by those who have an inactive infection.
- ✓ **IF I AM EXPOSED TO AN ACTIVE CASE IN SCHOOL WILL I GET THE DISEASE?** A healthy person's immune system can effectively control the infection, often for a lifetime. Only about one in ten persons who become infected will develop the active disease. Preventive therapy can reduce an infected person's risk of developing active disease.
- ✓ **HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE BEEN INFECTED?** There is a simple skin test that can identify those who have been infected with the TB germ. A positive test means that you have the TB germ in your body, it does not mean you are sick. A positive skin test should be followed by additional tests, including a chest X-ray and/or sputum samples to confirm you do not have the active disease. Contact your physician or the local health department for more information.
- ✓ **IS THERE A TREATMENT?** A combination of drugs used over a period of six to nine months is very effective in treating TB. TB cases with active disease are noninfectious soon after they begin treatment.
- ✓ **ARE SCHOOL CHILDREN BEING SCREENED FOR TB?** The health department routinely screens only foreign-born students enrolling in school for the first time, children who have resided in a foreign country for five consecutive months or more during the last three years, and refugees.
- ✓ **WHY DOESN'T THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT SCREEN ALL CHILDREN?** The health department is following the recommendations of the U.S. Public Health Service by focusing their attention on persons in the at-risk groups mentioned above. Other at-risk groups are the homeless, injected drug users, and people living with AIDS.
- ✓ **WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISK TO MY CHILD?** Contact your family physician or school health nurse.

If you need assistance, call the safety section at 571-423-2010, the Fairfax County Health Department at 703-246-2947, or the American Lung Association at 703-591-4131.