

Your Health Matters

What You Need to Know About TB!

Tuberculosis (TB) was once the leading cause of death in the United States, but it has faded from the memories of most Americans, thanks to medical advances and public health efforts. Missouri Rehabilitation Center was originally established as the Missouri State Sanatorium in 1907 to treat TB. TB, also known as the “White Plague”, was a major health problem. A diagnosis of tuberculosis often meant impending death and the only known treatment for it was fresh air, sunshine, nutrition, and bed rest. To keep the disease from spreading, patients were isolated from society. The Missouri Legislature appropriated \$50,000 to establish a sanatorium.

On March 24th each year we commemorate World TB Day to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social, and economic impact of tuberculosis and urge acceleration of efforts to end the global TB epidemic. This year, we commemorate the 136th anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch’s announcement in 1882 of his discovery of the tuberculosis bacillus, the cause of TB. His groundbreaking research opened the way toward diagnosing and curing TB.

Despite significant progress over the last decades, TB continues to be the top infectious killer worldwide, claiming over 4,500 lives a day. The emergence of drug-resistant TB poses a major health threat and could put at risk the gains made in efforts to end TB!

“We need a new, expanded approach to eliminate TB in the United States,” says Dr. Phillip LoBue, Director of the Division of Tuberculosis Elimination at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “A major part of this approach is preventing people with latent TB infection from ever developing TB disease.” Latent TB infection is a condition in which a person is infected with the TB bacteria but does not currently have active TB and cannot spread TB to others. However, if these bacteria become active and multiply, latent TB infection can turn into TB disease. CDC estimates that up to 13 million Americans have latent TB infection, and without treatment, approximately one in ten of these people will develop TB disease.

It’s hard to predict who will develop TB disease and who will not, but some people have a higher risk. CDC and the United States Preventative Services Task Force recommend screening for latent TB infection in populations at increased risk.

You should talk to your doctor or about getting a TB blood test or TB skin test if:

- You had close contact with someone with TB disease;
- You are from, or often visit, a part of the world where TB is common;
- You spend time in places where TB is more common, like hospitals, long term care facilities, correctional facilities, or homeless shelters; and/or
- You have HIV, diabetes, or other health problem that make it harder for your body to fight off disease.

You can receive TB screening, a skin test or a blood test at the Montgomery County Health Department. A TB blood test or TB skin test can find infection, and there are several options available for treating latent TB infection. Please call 573-564-2495 for an appointment. The cost is \$10.00, and you do not need a doctor's order. You can walk just walk in and ask to be tested. Routine TB screenings are provided Monday through Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 PM.

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthyMOCO. ■

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Harman".