

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Confirmed Case of Tuberculosis

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has been notified of a confirmed case of tuberculosis in the health district. The individual has been temporarily isolated while undergoing treatment for the disease. The risk to the community is minimal. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Tuberculosis team is working with SWNPHD to identify people who may have been exposed and has been contacting them for testing.

“Tuberculosis in Nebraska is very uncommon,” explained Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “It does sometimes happen and when it does there is a team at DHHS with years of experience to support us.”

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis, commonly known as TB, is a disease that can damage a person’s lungs or other parts of the body, causing serious illness. It is spread when a person with active, untreated tuberculosis germs in the lungs or throat expels those germs into the air by coughing, sneezing, or speaking. Usually, only people who have had very close, day-to-day contact with the infected person are at a higher risk of contracting the illness. **TB is less contagious than measles, mumps, chicken pox, and influenza.**

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of tuberculosis depend on where in the body the TB germs are growing. In the lungs it causes a cough that lasts longer than 3 weeks, chest pain, fever, night sweats, chills, loss of appetite, weakness or fatigue, and weight loss. Sometimes the phlegm that gets coughed up from the lungs can look bloody. In other parts of the body, TB may cause blood in the urine, headache or confusion, back pain, or hoarseness of the throat.

How do you know if you have tuberculosis?

A skin test or blood test can determine whether someone has been exposed to TB disease. Those whose skin or blood tests are positive will have more tests to determine whether they have inactive tuberculosis infection or active tuberculosis disease.

An inactive TB infection is called latent tuberculosis infection. This means they have TB germs in their bodies, but the germs are inactive and are not contagious. These people are encouraged to receive treatment to prevent their tuberculosis germs from becoming active. People with active tuberculosis disease will need to take medicine to treat the disease. TB is almost always cured with this medicine, if it is taken as directed.

If a person has active TB disease of the lungs or throat, they are probably infectious. They will need to stay home from work or school so that they don’t spread TB germs to other people. Medication is available for people with active TB who need to be treated. After taking medication they are no longer

infectious. Their medical provider will tell them when they can return to work or school or visit with friends.

“The good news is that with current TB tests we are able to identify and get treatment started a lot sooner,” said Propp. “The main things we want people to know about TB are it’s hard to catch, it’s treatable, and it’s curable.”

For more information visit cdc.gov/tb or contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website swhealth.ne.gov contains resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

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