

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Molly Carbajal
Santa Clara County Public Health Department
Office: 408-792-5207; Mobile: 408-590-5509
Molly.Carbajal@hhs.sccgov.org

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY TB RATES REMAIN HIGHER
THAN TWICE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE**

Santa Clara County, CA: An estimated 180,000 people in Santa Clara County are infected with tuberculosis and at risk for developing active TB disease in the future. While rates of active TB in Santa Clara County declined from 9.8 cases per 100,000 in 2013 to 8.8 cases per 100,000 people in 2014, these rates remain almost three times the national average.

March 24th is World Tuberculosis (TB) Day and the Santa Clara County Tuberculosis Control and Prevention Program is releasing new data showing that while case counts in Santa Clara County have declined from 181 to 163 in the past year, these counts continue to be higher than most US states and the fourth highest in California.

Once someone becomes infected with TB, the immune system can keep the bacteria from growing but they will still show evidence of infection; this is what is called latent TB infection (LTBI). People with LTBI have a 10% chance of developing active TB disease over their lifetime. Certain medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, HIV, or medications that weaken the immune system significantly increase the likelihood that TB infection becomes active TB disease.

"TB is spread through the air and can affect anyone in our community," said Dr. Teeb Al-Samarrai, Deputy Health Officer and TB Controller for Santa Clara County. "If we can effectively use the tools at our disposal to identify those who may have TB infection and treat them early, we can prevent not just one but many future cases."

Each year, World TB Day is observed on March 24th. Santa Clara County is observing the day at the Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Campus with an event featuring presentations from Dr. Jonathan Blum, Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara, Department of Infectious Disease and Dr. Teeb Al-Samarrai, Deputy Health Officer & TB Controller. This year's theme is "Find TB. Treat TB: Working together to eliminate TB." To support these efforts, the California TB Controller's Association is releasing a new Universal Adult Risk Assessment for TB to help providers identify patients with TB infection and get them treated. The Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership is a coalition of organizations committed to ensuring that those infected with TB and at greatest risk for developing active TB disease are identified early and get the care and treatment they need.

"The number of identified TB cases may change year to year but we know that there is a large population with latent TB," said Patricia Tind of Breathe California of the Bay Area and Co-Chair of the Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership. "Many of these people are unaware that they harbor these germs. Outreach and education to both patients and providers will continue to be an important component of controlling TB."

While there has been substantial progress in the treatment of TB, it is still a global and local threat to public health. Worldwide, an estimated 2 billion people are infected with TB with 1.5 million

deaths each year and it continues to be leading cause of death among patients with HIV worldwide. TB is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and spreads from person to person through the air when an individual with active, infectious TB disease coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Active TB most commonly affects the lungs but can also affect any part of the body including the spine and brain.

For more information about the Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership, please visit www.sccphd.org, or www.lungsrus.org.

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