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General Information

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Environmental Health
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Immunizations
(630) 682-7400

Sexually
Transmitted Diseases
(630) 221-7553

HIV/AIDS
(630) 221-7553

Tuberculosis
(630) 221-7522

School Health
(630) 221-7300

Animal Services
(630) 407-2800

Please contact
Communicable Disease
and Epidemiology at
(630) 221-7553
with suggestions
or to be added to the
distribution list.

The purpose of this two-page surveillance update is to promote the control and prevention of **communicable disease (CD)** by providing clinically relevant information and resources to healthcare professionals in DuPage County.



Under the Microscope *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*

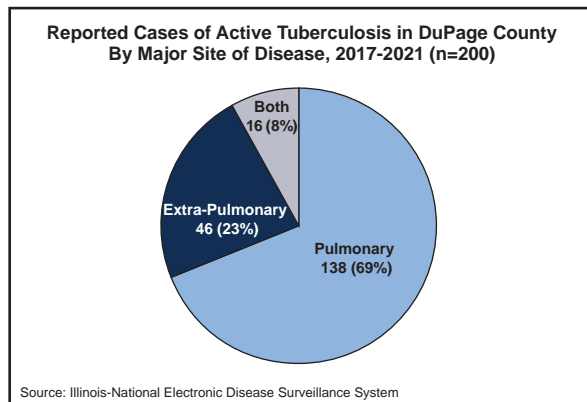
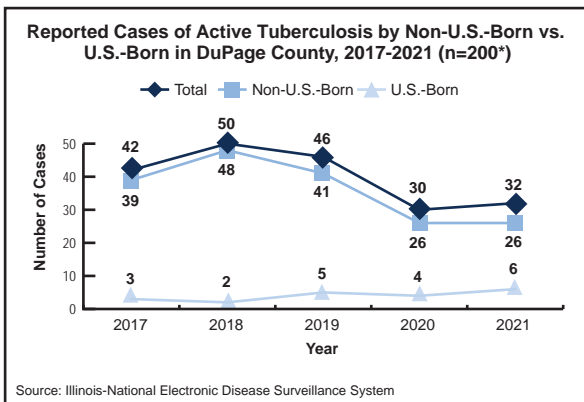
For questions or to report a suspect or known case of TB, please call the TB Clinic at (630) 221-7522.

World TB Day is recognized each year on March 24. This annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes tuberculosis (TB). World TB Day is a day to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world. It's an opportunity to share successes in TB prevention and control and raise awareness of the challenges that hinder our progress toward the elimination of this devastating disease.¹

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a substantial effect on U.S. TB disease trends. In 2021, reported incidence in the U.S. increased 9.4 percent from a historic low in 2020 but remained 12.6 percent lower than the 2019 rate. The continued, substantial reduction from pre-pandemic levels raises concern for missed or delayed TB diagnoses. In addition, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that up to 13 million people in the U.S. have **latent TB infection**, and without treatment, risk developing active TB disease in the future.²

Before COVID-19, TB disease diagnoses typically declined between 1% and 2% each year. The 2020 and 2021 declines may be related to factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including a true reduction in incidence as well as delayed or missed TB diagnoses. For example:

- Efforts to prevent COVID-19, such as **wearing masks and staying six feet away** from others, may also reduce the spread of TB.
- Widespread **disruptions to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic may have delayed TB diagnoses.** The COVID-19 pandemic has strained public health services, including TB prevention and control services.
- **Similarities in symptoms between COVID-19 and TB disease may have led to missed TB diagnoses.** Case reports have revealed some people with TB disease were evaluated for COVID-19 — but not tested for TB — during multiple encounters with healthcare systems. Initial misassumptions might have contributed to missed diagnoses, or delayed diagnoses until more advanced stages of disease.³



Avoiding missed or delayed diagnosis of TB is crucial to preventing transmission. TB should be considered in the differential diagnosis of patients with **prolonged cough (>2 weeks) or TB symptoms such as unintentional weight loss or hemoptysis**, particularly among persons with epidemiologic risk factors for TB (e.g., birth or former residence in a country with higher TB incidence than that in the U.S., history of living in a congregate setting such as a homeless shelter or a correctional facility, or immune suppression).⁴

Health care and public health systems must be restored and strengthened to address TB disease in the wake of COVID-19. It is critical to continue to ensure correct and timely diagnoses, focus on essential TB prevention and control activities, and expand services equitably to address persistent disparities in TB.⁵

This year, CDC published guidance for a **new treatment regimen for extensively drug-resistant TB disease** and a **shorter four-month regimen to treat drug-susceptible TB disease**. CDC is also engaging with communities disproportionately affected by TB through capacity-building efforts like the **TB Elimination Alliance**, and a new communications campaign **Think. Test. Treat TB**, aimed at raising awareness of TB prevention and promoting testing for and treatment of latent TB infection.²

Some people develop **TB disease** soon after becoming infected (within weeks) before their immune system can fight the TB bacteria. Other people may get sick years later, when their immune system becomes weak for another reason. **Overall, about 5 to 10% of infected persons who do not receive treatment for latent TB infection will develop TB disease at some time in their lives.** For persons whose immune systems are weak, especially those with HIV infection, the risk of developing TB disease is much higher than for persons with normal immune systems.⁶

Ending TB will require a **dual approach of maintaining and strengthening current TB control priorities**, while increasing efforts to identify and treat latent TB infection, especially in populations at increased risk for TB disease.⁷

References:

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3. www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s0324-tuberculosis-covid-19.html
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