

Tuberculosis being treated in Lee County jails

Sept. 29, 2011

Fort Myers, FL—The Lee County Health Department, in cooperation with the Lee County Sheriff's Office and Corizon Health Care, is overseeing treatment of a Lee County Jail inmate for tuberculosis and the testing of inmates, corrections officers and staff.

The infected inmate is in isolation preventing further spread of the disease,

Lee County corrections officers, staff and other inmates who have a positive test will be administered a chest X-ray to determine if the disease is latent or active. Treatment will be offered for all latent and active TB infections.

Notification letters are being sent to released Lee County Jail inmates who may have been exposed to the patient between May 1 and September 4, 2011. The letter instructs former inmates to contact the Lee County Health Department for testing.

Anyone who was incarcerated in the Lee County Jail between May 1 and September 4, 2011, and believes they may have been exposed can call the Lee County Health Department at 332-9646 to schedule testing.

Symptoms can occur years after exposure, said Dr. Judith Hartner, health department director. Early identification and treatment of the disease are critical for the control of tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis is primarily a bacterial infection of the lungs, but can also attack the brain, kidneys and spine, according to the Centers for Disease Control. It requires an antibiotic treatment of six to 12 months. Patients who do not properly complete the drug treatment are likely to get sick again. The disease may be fatal when left untreated.

Prisons are considered high risk areas for contracting tuberculosis because of the likelihood of prolonged contact with infected persons.

Tuberculosis is primarily spread through prolonged contact with an infected person who is coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing or speaking. For more information go to www.leechd.com or www.cdc.gov .

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