

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Catherine Cioffi
Communications Director**

Office - (914) 995-2932

Cell- (914) 954 -5579

CCioffi@westchestergov.com

Caren Halbfinger

Office- (914) 813-5013

Cqh4@westchestergov.com

WORLD TB DAY OBSERVED SATURDAY

#WorldTBDay

(White Plains, NY) -- As World TB Day approaches on March 24, the Westchester County Department of Health encourages residents to ask their medical provider if a Tuberculosis (TB) screening is right for them.

Last year, cases of active TB were identified in Westchester County residents who ranged in age from newborn to 83 years old. TB also touched the lives of hundreds of Westchester residents who were exposed to someone with infectious TB at work, school or home, in a social setting or a healthcare facility. The Westchester County Department of Health informed them about their exposure, offered them screening to determine whether they had the disease, and provided follow-up treatment to those that needed it.

“Screening by a medical provider is important because people can unknowingly have early disease and can spread TB to people around them, even when they have no symptoms,” said Sherlita Amler, MD, Westchester County Commissioner of Health. “Appropriate treatment can stop this disease in its tracks.”

Tuberculosis disease begins with an infection that later develops into disease in some people. TB germs are spread through the air when a person with active TB disease coughs or sneezes. Many people are unaware they are at risk to develop TB disease because, like one-fourth of the world’s population, they were born in or spent time in a country where TB is prevalent and they were infected. People with a weakened immune system or who were recently infected with TB are at greater risk to develop the disease. If untreated, TB can be fatal.

“We have tools today that make preventive TB treatment much more convenient for patients,” Amler said. “These tools, which include a smartphone app for directly observed therapy and a shorter treatment regimen, are helping us to reduce the number of active cases of TB in Westchester. But we still see new and more complex cases that could be avoided with earlier detection and treatment.”

To protect the public, the Health Department provides care and medication with no out-of-pocket cost to people diagnosed with active TB. Last year, 31 people were newly identified with active TB. To decrease the likelihood that TB will spread to others, the Health Department also:

- Follows up with residents with active TB whose care is managed by other healthcare providers to ensure patients are appropriately treated,
- Verifies that people with active TB do not attend school, work and other places where they could spread TB until treatment makes them non-contagious, and
- Manages complex cases of multi-drug resistant TB that require extensive medication regimens and years of monitoring

The Health Department evaluates and potentially treats inactive (latent) TB in:

- Children 12-19 years old who are candidates for a shortened treatment,
- Children under 5 years old, who are at increased risk for developing active TB, and
- Pregnant and post-partum women

In 2017, Westchester County had the fourth highest case rate of residents with TB outside of New York City, according to the New York State Department of Health.

World Tuberculosis Day marks the day in 1882 when the discovery of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis was first announced.

For more information, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health.

About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth

County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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