



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT OBSERVES WORLD TB DAY MARCH 24

(White Plains, NY) – The Westchester County Department of Health is observing World TB Day, and reminding residents early detection and coordinated care remain critical to combating disease. World TB Day marks the discovery in 1882 of the bacteria that causes Tuberculosis.

TB is the world’s deadliest infectious disease, but it is preventable and curable. An estimated 1.7 billion people worldwide are infected with TB. In the U.S., 13 million people of all ages have latent TB. If the disease is left untreated, they may develop active TB in the future, spread the disease and feel quite ill.

In 2024, 49 residents ranging in age from two to 92 years old, were confirmed to have active TB. TB also touched the lives of many who were exposed to someone with infectious TB at work, school or home, in a social setting or a healthcare facility.

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “Screening by a medical provider is important because this disease can affect anyone, and those who don’t know they have early disease can spread TB to people who are closest to them, even when they have no symptoms. The right treatment can stop TB.”

Nearly all new cases of active TB come from people with latent (inactive) disease who at first show no signs of illness. About five to 15 percent of people with latent TB later develop symptoms and then spread infection through the air when they cough or sneeze. If a person is diabetic, there is a 20 percent likelihood that they will develop active TB. For every case of active TB, there are at least 1,500 people with latent infection.

The best way to stop the spread of TB is to identify people with latent infection via a simple TB skin or blood test and follow-up with antibiotic treatment. Most people are unaware they are at risk to develop TB disease, and it is only through testing that they can be identified and treated. Young children, people who are pregnant, or those with a weakened immune system due to diabetes, cancer or HIV are at greatest risk to develop active disease. If untreated, TB can lead to permanent disability or death.

To protect the public, the Health Department evaluates and potentially treats inactive TB in all people, including children, pregnant and post-partum women. For people diagnosed with active TB, the Health Department provides care and medication with no out-of-pocket cost.

Amler continued: “Early detection is so important and both preventive TB treatment and active TB treatment have benefited from medical and technological advances that have greatly reduced their duration. This has helped us reduce the number of active cases of TB in Westchester and limit the spread of this disease.”

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.

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