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Health department partners with school district to prevent spread of tuberculosis

PENSACOLA – The Escambia County Health Department, in conjunction with the Escambia County School District, is responding to a case of active tuberculosis at Pensacola High School, and has taken action to prevent further risk of infection. In order to exercise the utmost caution, the health department and school district will be skin testing staff and students who had close contact with the individual to rule out infection. Parents of students at the school will be contacted with information, and for permission for testing if their child is identified during the course of our investigation as possibly being at risk.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that are spread from person to person through the air. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but can also attack other body parts, such as kidneys, the spine and brain. TB bacteria are released into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People who are most likely to become infected are those who spend time on a daily basis with someone infected with active TB disease, such as family members. TB is not spread by casual contact or generally being in the same school as someone who is infected with TB. Testing of family members of students and staff at the school is not necessary.

Active TB disease can be treated with antibiotics. A typical course of treatment may take six months to one year to kill all TB germs. The goals of TB treatment are to cure the patient and to minimize the possibility of transmission to other people.

For more information on tuberculosis, please contact the Tuberculosis Control Program at the Escambia County Health Department by calling 850.595.6564.

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