



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Department of Health and University of Hawaii at Hilo notify students and staff of TB exposure at Hilo campus *Clinic to be held on campus in April*

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) and University of Hawaii at Hilo are notifying approximately 120 students and staff members of their recent possible exposure to a person with active tuberculosis (TB) at the Hilo campus. All students and staff will be receiving a notice describing the situation and whether testing is recommended. A clinic for TB testing will be held on campus this month and DOH will be testing only those persons with regular close contact to the patient.

“The University of Hawaii Hilo campus activities and all classes can be held as scheduled with no safety concerns related to the past possible exposure,” said Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler. “We don’t expect to find more individuals with infectious TB disease, but we hope to identify individuals who may have had recent exposure, are not contagious, and could benefit from preventative medication.”

“Tuberculosis usually requires many hours of close indoor person-to-person contact to spread it to others,” said Dr. Elizabeth MacNeill, chief of the TB Control Branch. “Most of the students and staff are not at risk, and our investigation to date has found no related active TB cases and no spread of the disease at the university or in the community.”

DOH conducted an extensive investigation and evaluation of potential contacts and possible exposure immediately after being notified of the active TB case. The individual is receiving treatment and is no longer infectious. Further Information on the individual and their case is confidential and protected by law.

TB is a disease that is commonly seen in the lungs and can only be spread from person-to-person through the air. When a person with active TB disease in the lung or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, tiny drops containing *M. tuberculosis* may be spread into the air. If another person inhales these drops there is a chance that they will become infected with TB. Two forms of TB exist, both of which are treatable and curable:

1. Latent TB infection – when a person has TB bacteria in their body but the body's immune system is protecting them and they are not sick. Someone with latent TB infection cannot spread the infection to other people.
2. Active TB disease – when a person becomes sick with TB because their immune system can no longer protect them. It usually takes many months or years from having infection to developing the disease and most people (90 percent) will never become ill. Someone with active TB disease may be able to spread the disease to other people.

For more information on tuberculosis, please call the State of Hawaii Tuberculosis Control Program at 832-5731 or visit the Department of Health website at www.hawaii.gov/health/tb.

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