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## **Student at Heritage High School tests positive for active tuberculosis**

A student at Heritage High School in Menifee has been diagnosed with active tuberculosis and Riverside County health officials are working with school representatives to identify students and staff who might have been exposed to the illness.

The student is receiving treatment and is expected to recover, although the individual will not return to school until a medical clearance is issued. The student is not being identified due to confidentiality requirements.

Riverside County health officials are sending out about 500 letters to students and the parents of students under 18 who may have been exposed to the illness. Staff members who may have been exposed will receive notification from the school.

As a precautionary measure, the health department is recommending that anyone who receives the notice be screened with a TB skin test at a clinic being planned in January at the school.

If the skin test reads positive, the individual will get a chest x-ray and follow up with an appropriate provider. The x-ray will help determine whether an individual might simply have a latent (inactive) infection rather than active TB.

Those who receive the Public Health notification letter and prefer to be tested during the winter break can opt to be tested free of cost at a county-operated health clinic in Perris or Hemet. They can also be tested by their own health-care provider at their own expense.

Those who do not receive notification are considered not to be at risk for exposure, and TB testing is not recommended.

Riverside County Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser emphasized the risk of transmission is low.

“While the risk of infection is slight, it is important that those who are notified take the time to get tested,” Kaiser said. “The testing is simple and provides peace of mind.”

PUHSD Superintendent Grant Bennett said, “We are taking this situation very seriously and working closely with the Riverside County Health Department on behalf of our students and staff.”

Tuberculosis is a disease spread through the air during prolonged, repeated and close contact with an individual who is infected with active tuberculosis. People may contract TB when breathing air exhaled by someone who is sick with the illness. When left untreated, TB can result in serious complications.

TB is not spread by shaking hands, sharing food or drink, or via bed linens or toilet seats. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. A person with inactive (latent) TB cannot spread it to others.