



Contact:

Jose Arballo Jr., Senior Public Information Specialist

Riverside County Public Health Department  
Office: (951) 358-5599 Cell: (951) 712-3705

Dec. 23, 2013

## Health Officials: TB test results within expected range

About 1,300 students and staff from Indio High School returned to campus during winter break Monday to have their tuberculosis skin tests reviewed, and the results were within expected levels, according to Riverside County health officials.

On Monday, county health nurses evaluated 1,332 skin tests administered Friday during a four-hour clinic at the school. There were 126 students whose test were positive for possible exposure to the illness, but officials emphasized those results do not mean they have active tuberculosis. Those students are being asked to get a chest X-ray.

Dr. Cameron Kaiser, the county's public health officer, said the rate of positive test results are within expected levels.

"Given this population, we would expect a positive test result of no more than 10 to 15 percent," said Kaiser, who ordered the entire student body and staff be tested after a student was diagnosed with active tuberculosis recently. "These numbers are very reassuring for the community as a whole. The health department will follow up with those who tested positive for exposure."

A line of students winding back several hundred yards awaited officials as they opened the clinic Monday. All but 31 students who were tested Friday returned to get their skin test read.

"It shows a lot about the maturity level of the students here," said Principal Rudy Ramirez. "They knew it was important to get it done and they did it."

Kaiser said he is confident that the likelihood of the illness spreading remains low.

Those students and staff who could not show up Monday were given the option Friday of having a blood test done. Kaiser said about 200 blood samples were taken and there were eight samples that tested positive for possible exposure. They will also need to have a chest X-ray done.

School officials have ordered that all students and staff members show proof that they have been tested, as well as show results of those tests, before returning to the school. Friday's screening was scheduled after follow-up X-rays on students tested earlier this week identified five students who needed further examination.

"This is the system working as designed," Kaiser said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tuberculosis is caused by bacteria that usually attack the lungs, but it can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. It is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

It is not spread by shaking someone's hand, sharing food or drink, touching bed linens or toilet seats, sharing toothbrushes or kissing. Some of the symptoms include: Coughing with sputum for more than three to four weeks, coughing up blood, pain in the chest when breathing, unexplained loss of appetite or weight loss and fever with night sweats for more than three weeks.

For more information about tuberculosis:

<http://www.rivco-diseasecontrol.org/Programs/TuberculosisControl.aspx>