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## **Vista Murrieta High School student suspected of having tuberculosis; testing urged for some students and staff**

A student at Vista Murrieta High School is suspected of having 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 has been cleared to return to school. The student is not being identified due to confidentiality requirements.

Riverside County health officials are sending out about 250 letters to students and the parents of students under 18 who may have been exposed to this 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 from the department be screened with a TB skin test at a clinic being planned at the high school. Anyone who receives the notification letter can also opt to be tested by their own health care provider. 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 been exposed to the illness rather than having active TB.

Those who do not receive notification from public health 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, does not take much time and can provide peace of mind.”

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 TB. When left untreated, TB can result in complications that can be serious.

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.