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World TB Day on March 24

On March 24, individuals around the world are encouraged to recognize World TB Day. This annual event commemorates the date (March 24, 1882) when Robert Koch announced his discovery of the bacillus (rod-shaped bacterium) that causes tuberculosis (TB).

For 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has adopted the theme "Unite to End TB." The CDC and its domestic and international partners, including the National TB Controllers Association and the global Stop TB Partnership, are working together to eliminate this deadly disease.

According to Vonda Pruitt, Director of Nursing and Social Services for the Iroquois County Public Health Department, most people don't think too much about TB and how it is spread. Mrs. Pruitt said, "World TB Day presents an opportunity for people to learn more about the disease."

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by germs that are spread from person to person through the air via respiratory droplets. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys or the spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get treatment.

Symptoms of TB include weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats. Symptoms also include coughing, chest pain, and coughing up blood. TB germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. Persons who breathe in the air containing TB germs can become infected with active or latent TB.

Mrs. Pruitt said individuals with latent TB infection have the TB germs in their bodies, but they are not sick because the germs are not active. "These people do not have symptoms of TB disease, and they cannot spread the germs to others," said Pruitt. "However," she continued, "they may develop TB disease in the future and are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing TB disease." According to Pruitt, people with active TB disease are sick from TB germs that are active, meaning that they are multiplying and destroying tissue in their body. "These individuals usually have symptoms of TB disease, are capable of spreading germs to others and are prescribed drugs that can treat TB disease," she said.

If you have spent time with someone with TB disease or someone with symptoms of TB, you should go to your doctor or to the health department for testing. More information regarding TB may be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/tb> or by calling Iroquois County Public Health Department at 815-432-2483.
