



**Date: March 18, 2019**

**FOR RELEASE THE WEEK OF:  
Immediate Release**

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**World TB Day on March 24**

Each year we recognize World TB Day on March 24. This annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis (TB), which led the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.

TB is one of the world's deadliest diseases. One fourth of the world's population is infected with TB. In 2017, 10 million people around the world became sick with TB disease and there were 1.3 million TB-related deaths worldwide. A total of 9,105 TB cases (2.8 cases per 100,000 persons) were reported in the United States in 2017.

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. Up to 13 million people in the United States have latent TB infection, and without treatment, they are at risk for developing TB disease in the future.

According to Vonda Pruitt, Director of Nursing and Social Services for the Iroquois County Public Health Department, 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 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 the Iroquois County Public Health Department at 815-432-2483.

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