



**To: CAHAN San Diego Participants**

**Date: February 27, 2024**

**From: Public Health Services**

**Health Advisory: Increase in Tuberculosis in San Diego County**

#### **Key Messages**

- The California Department of Public Health recently provided notice that there was a 15% increase in new cases of active tuberculosis (TB) statewide in 2023, compared to 2022.
- The County of San Diego is also reporting an increase in TB cases, with 243 cases reported in the County in 2023. This represents an increase of about 17% from 2022, when 208 cases were reported.

#### **Background**

In 2020, global, national, state, and local TB diagnoses decreased dramatically, likely representing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. TB cases may have been prevented by some of the preventive measures adopted during the pandemic, such as masking and social distancing. TB diagnoses may also have been missed or delayed during the pandemic due to disruption in healthcare services, misdiagnosis of TB given similarity with some COVID-19 symptoms, or other factors.

San Diego County saw fewer TB diagnoses during the pandemic consistent with these national trends. In the five years before the COVID-19 pandemic, an average of approximately 244 cases of TB were diagnosed each year. In 2020, that number dropped to 193, and then increased to an annual average of 205 cases 2021-2022. The 2023 total of 243 cases marks a return to the pre-pandemic level.

Active tuberculosis is a disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The disease most commonly affects the lungs but can affect other parts of the body too. TB can be spread when someone sick with active TB of the lungs or larynx coughs, speaks, or breathes. When someone is infected with TB, they usually do not get sick right away, but develop latent TB infection (LTBI). Over 175,000 people in San Diego County are believed to have latent TB infection, and most do not know it. Without preventive treatment, as many as 10% of people with latent TB infection may go on to get sick with active, contagious TB disease.

#### **Recommendations**

Providers should maintain vigilant for the possibility of encountering persons with active TB in their clinical care and consider TB in the differential diagnosis especially for people with cough for longer than 2-3 weeks, prolonged fever, night sweats, or unintentional weight loss. Appropriate diagnostic evaluation of a person with concerning clinical presentation should include chest radiography and sputum samples for acid fast bacilli (AFB) smear, a nucleic acid amplification test for tuberculosis (for example, Xpert® MTB/RIF), and an AFB/mycobacterial culture. Providers should also note that, in accordance with [California Regulations](#), and [California Health and Safety Code 121365](#), all patients with suspected or confirmed active TB disease must be reported to San Diego County TB Control within 24

hours of initial suspicion. To report a patient with suspected or confirmed TB disease during business hours, please call (619) 692-8610; after hours reporting forms may be faxed to (619) 692-5516.

Providers should also recognize the opportunity to prevent TB by identifying, testing, and treating people with LTBI. Primary care providers and specialists serving people with medical conditions like diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or immunocompromising conditions that increase the risk for progression from LTBI to active TB disease, can have the greatest impact on diagnosing and treating LTBI cases. Providers should consider adopting a risk assessment tool [TB Risk Assessment \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](#) to identify patients at increased risk for TB, screening those patients with an interferon gamma release assay (IGRA), and treating patients with LTBI with a short-course, rifamycin-based regimen.

## **Opportunities**

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors recognized the challenge facing our region and the readiness of our community to take steps to eliminate the disease, with the approval of the San Diego TB Elimination Initiative in 2020. This award-winning public-private partnership has been bringing together key stakeholders in our region—from medical providers, clinics, health systems, insurers, schools, outreach workers, to community-based organizations—to raise awareness about TB and the opportunities to prevent TB among San Diegans at risk. Building off the successes of the TB Elimination Initiative, the County TB Control Branch and Champions for Health are partnering to host an in-person “San Diego TB Prevention Education and Community Engagement Summit” at the Southeastern Livewell Center on March 22, 2024. Members of the medical community and individuals and organizations engaged in outreach and service to portions of our community disproportionately impacted by TB are especially encouraged to participate.

Register now! [San Diego TB Prevention Education and Community Engagement Summit \(cvent.com\)](#)

## **Resources**

[ATS/IDSA/CDC Guidelines for Diagnosis of Tuberculosis in Adults and Children.](#)

[U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations on screening for latent tuberculosis infection in adults. 2023.](#)

[National Tuberculosis Coalition of America \(formerly National TB Controllers Association\)](#)

[CDC LTBI Treatment Guidance.](#)

[TB Risk Assessment \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](#)

[Substantial Increase in Tuberculosis in California: Recommendations for California Healthcare Providers](#)

[Xpert® MTB/RIF Assay: Package Insert](#)

Thank you for your participation.

### **CAHAN San Diego**

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