



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Melissa Wade
Public Health Information Officer
412-578-8312
mwade@achd.net

Ebony R. Pugh
Pittsburgh Public Schools
412-529-3616
epugh1@pghboe.net

Health Department Returns to Local School for Follow-Up Tuberculosis Testing
No Active Cases Found in Initial Testing; Follow-Up Testing is Standard Procedure

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department will return to Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8 on Tuesday, April 28th, to conduct re-testing of students and staff who were tested in February for Tuberculosis (TB). No active cases were found in the initial testing, but a re-test is standard procedure to ensure that no one has converted to positive status.

A confirmed case of Tuberculosis was reported at Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8 in February. In response to that report, the Health Department joined Pittsburgh Public Schools to alert those in immediate contact with the individual and also offered testing to all students and staff on February 17th and 23rd. At South Hills, 289 students and 44 staff were tested; at Brashear, 138 students and 36 staff, took advantage of the testing. As the individual with TB was a student at South Hills 6-8, the re-testing will occur only at that site.

“Our Infectious Disease and TB teams worked very efficiently to complete this investigation and did an excellent job. We are happy that their work resulted in us being able to verify that there are no additional cases of Tuberculosis,” said Dr. Karen A. Hacker, Director of the Health Department. “I’m very thankful for the cooperation of Superintendent Dr. Linda Lane and the administration, staff and faculty of the Pittsburgh Public Schools for its unwavering support in this effort. Their assistance enabled the appropriate procedures to occur efficiently and allowed us to quickly determine that there was no threat to the public.”

Of the over 500 individuals tested, 46 individuals did show a positive response to the test. Each person who tested positive was evaluated for symptoms and received a chest x-ray. None of those tested had any symptoms, and all chest x-rays were negative for active TB. Individuals with a positive test and negative chest x-ray were offered medication to prevent future cases. While taking the medication is voluntary, the Health Department did recommend it as a preventative measure for future activation of TB.

A positive TST (TB Screening test) does not mean that a person has Tuberculosis. A positive test only means that a person has been infected by the TB germ. Not everyone infected with the TB germ becomes sick. If the test is positive, further evaluation, including a chest x-ray, will be performed to rule out or diagnose TB.

“We are so grateful for the support we have received from the Allegheny County Health Department. They completed more than 500 tests of our students and staff with professionalism and care, and were able to verify that there are no additional active cases of TB,” said Superintendent Linda Lane. “I also want to recognize our staff, of both schools and central office, for their work to coordinate this huge undertaking.”

TB is a lung disease. Exposure does not mean infection, but in rare cases of infection, effective treatment with antibiotics is available. A positive TB screening test does not mean that the person has tuberculosis. A positive test only means that the person has been infected by the TB germ. Not everyone infected with the TB germ becomes sick. If the test is positive, further evaluation including a chest x-ray will be performed to rule out or diagnose TB. If a person has a positive skin or blood test, but is not sick with active TB, then he or she is not contagious. Symptoms of TB include weight loss, fever, night sweats and a cough that lasts longer than three weeks. Most people who are coughing during this time of year have a virus such as the common cold or the flu.

Parents/guardians are always welcome to contact the ACHD’s Tuberculosis Program with questions and concerns. The Program may be contacted by phone at 412-578-7901 to schedule an appointment, or can be visited in-person at the TB clinic located at 3901 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh.

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KAREN A. HACKER, MD, MPH, DIRECTOR

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

542 FOURTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219

PHONE (412) 687-ACHD • FAX (412) 578-8325 • WWW.ACHD.NET

