



**For Immediate Release
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World Tuberculosis Day Brings Renewed Concern About this Contagious Disease

Tuberculosis (TB) remains the leading cause of death from contagious disease in the world. World TB Day, held on March 24 each year, is an occasion for people around the world to raise awareness about the international health threat presented by tuberculosis and recognize that effective treatment exists. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH), the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) and the American Lung Association in Utah (ALAU) is observing World TB Day by giving health care providers the most up-to-date information on diagnosing and treating multi-drug resistant TB through a state-wide World TB Conference on March 26th.

Even though Utah is a low-incidence TB state, from 2004 to 2008, a total of 743 Utah residents were reported as suspect TB. Twenty-two percent of those were later diagnosed with active TB.

The majority of Utah's TB cases occur in Salt Lake County, with the Salt Lake Valley Health District carrying 66% of the state's TB burden with over the past five years,

“It is a public health responsibility to conduct contact investigations on all cases of infectious TB, since these people’s close contacts are approximately 75 times more likely to be infected with TB than the general public,” states Dagmar Vitek, MD, Medical Director of the Salt Lake Valley Health Department. “Therefore, it is critical to find, evaluate and treat infected contacts to stop the spread of the disease. The good news is that people with active TB disease can be treated and often cured with medical treatment.”

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Overall, one-third of the world's population is currently infected with the TB bacteria, and each year about 1.7 million people die from this disease. However, tuberculosis can be controlled, cured, and with diligent efforts and sufficient resources, eventually eliminated.

"Like the common cold, TB spreads through the air. When infectious people cough, sneeze, talk or spit, they propel TB germs into the air, and exposure to these germs usually over an extended period of time can infect others in close contact," added Vitek. TB is *not* spread by shaking hands; sharing food or drink; touching bed linens or toilet seats; sharing toothbrushes; kissing; smoking; or sharing cigarettes.

Symptoms of TB of the lungs may include a cough that lasts over three weeks, coughing up blood or phlegm, or chest pain. General symptoms may include weakness or fatigue; weight loss; chills or fever; and night sweats

If you think you may have been exposed to someone with TB at any time in the past, or you have emigrated from a country that has TB, you should contact your doctor or local health department about getting a simple TB skin test. For more information about tuberculosis or World TB Day, visit the Salt Lake Valley Health Department website at www.slvhealth.org.

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