

**Alabama Department of Public Health**  
**Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT) Health Alert Network (HAN) message**  
**1/12/2016**

**Tuberculosis Outbreak in Perry County ALERT**

This alert is to notify all health care providers of a tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in West Central Alabama. This alert concerns ongoing transmission of TB linked to a neighborhood known as "The Hill" in the town of Marion in Perry County, Alabama. The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is conducting intense contact identification and tracing to find patients with TB and provide preventive therapy to persons exposed to this disease.

ADPH has determined that patients with TB diagnosed in other cities and towns in Alabama were exposed to TB in Marion. Specifically, twenty of twenty six patients diagnosed since January 2014 are from Marion, four are from Tuscaloosa and two are from Centerville. This indicates a case rate of 253/100,000 in the town of Marion, far exceeding the case rate of 2.8/100,000 in Alabama in 2014. Of these 26 patients, three adults have died. Four children have been diagnosed with TB and are being treated. The majority of the patients with TB have been diagnosed at a local physician's office in Marion or upon an emergency department visit to DCH or Vaughn Regional Hospital. However, due to the ongoing transmission of tuberculosis, we are asking your continued vigilance in considering TB.

Please consider TB as part of your differential diagnosis in patients with compatible signs and symptoms with significant time spent in Marion, (Perry County) Alabama. General signs and symptoms of TB include cough of more than two weeks duration, shortness of breathing, fever, night sweats, weight loss and fatigue. In addition, co-morbidities such as HIV, alcohol or substance abuse, and diabetes may warrant including TB in the differential diagnosis. Children with TB, especially those less than five years of age, may not present with classic pulmonary symptoms and may have lethargy and failure to thrive including poor developmental milestones and failure to gain weight. Most TB cases will not report a history of exposure when seen by a physician so it is important to "Think TB" for persons with persistent cough, "recurrent" bronchitis or pneumonia.

Basic testing for tuberculosis includes a CXR, a PPD or Interferon gamma release assay (IGRA), and sputums for acid fast bacilli smear and culture (AFB smear and culture) on three consecutive mornings. Sputum smears and cultures should be sent to the Alabama Department of Public Health Bureau of Clinical Laboratories. Please visit the website at [www.adph.org/bcl](http://www.adph.org/bcl) for instructions regarding submitting specimens. Special management of children suspected of having tuberculosis can be arranged through ADPH in consultation with Children's of Alabama.

Phone consultation with physicians having expertise in infectious diseases, public health, internal medicine, and pediatrics is available through ADPH. Please call your local health department or 334-206-5330 if you need to report a case of tuberculosis, arrange discussion concerning a patient, or have any additional questions.

Thank you for all you do to take care of the citizens of Alabama and for your contribution in bringing this outbreak under control.