



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### It's Time to Test for TB

*March 24 is World TB Day!*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (March 23, 2018) – As part of its ongoing work to educate the public about tuberculosis (TB) and prevent the spread of the disease, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is reminding Kentuckians that March 24 is World TB Day.

This year's theme from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is "It's Time," in an effort to encourage latent TB testing among providers and raise awareness for the public. The theme emphasizes the partnership between various organizations and highlights efforts to eliminate TB. To show his support, Governor Matthew Bevin has declared March 2019 as ["TB Awareness Month."](#)

"TB remains a serious public health concern all around the world – and we continue to see cases each year in Kentucky where 65 active cases were reported last year," said DPH Commissioner Dr. Jeff Howard. "Too many of our fellow Kentuckians, as well as people around the country, still suffer from TB. We must continue to find and treat cases

of active TB disease and also test and treat latent TB infection to prevent progression to disease and turn TB elimination into a reality.”

World TB Day was created to commemorate the date in 1882 when Robert Koch announced the discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacterium that causes TB. Among infectious diseases caused by a single agent or pathogen, TB remains the second leading cause of death in adults worldwide, second only to HIV-AIDS. World TB Day is one of eight globally recognized public health campaigns marked by the World Health Organization (WHO).

TB is a potentially fatal disease that usually attacks the lungs but can affect any part of the body, including the kidneys, spine or brain.

The CDC estimates there were 10 million active cases of TB in 2017 and 1.3 million TB-related deaths.

Globally, the rate of new TB cases has been falling for about a decade, and TB mortality has fallen by 45 percent since 1990. However, the presence of multidrug resistant TB, which is much more difficult to treat, is a chief concern.

TB is a disease that is transmitted person to person through the air when an infectious person coughs, shouts, sneezes, speaks or sings. Symptoms of TB include a cough lasting more than three weeks, fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, coughing up blood, loss of appetite, chest pain, and fatigue. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. People who are at high risk for becoming infected with TB after an exposure include close contacts of a person with TB; people with poor access to healthcare, such as those who are homeless; people who live or work in high-risk congregate settings (i.e., homeless shelters, nursing homes); intravenous drug users; healthcare workers; infants, children and adolescents exposed to high-risk adults; and people from foreign countries where TB is common. Persons with TB infection are not contagious to others unless their infection progresses over time to active TB disease.

Risk factors for progression to active TB disease include HIV infection, new TB infection in the last two years, diabetes, immunosuppression, and age, especially children

younger than four years old. People with active TB are usually infectious and can give the disease to other people.

More information about TB as well as Kentucky's efforts to track and prevent the spread of the disease can be found at <http://www.chfs.ky.gov/dph/epi/tb.htm>.

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*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*