



# BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT TUBERCULOSIS (TB) CONTROL PROGRAM



## THE TUBERCULOSIS REVIEW BALTIMORE

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## THE LAUNCH!

Welcome to the premiere issue of The Tuberculosis Review. This newsletter is intended to generate awareness and increase knowledge about TB, among health care providers, homeless service provider and shelter staff, and community organizations that provide services to individuals who are at high risk for TB.

This newsletter will provide a variety of information regarding TB prevention, TB control recommendations

and guidelines, and educational resources. By utilizing this newsletter as a tool to reinforce our message, we hope to maintain continuous communication and extend our reach in the community.

The TB control Program welcomes and encourages those who work with populations at risk for TB to take advantage of the information presented in this newsletter. Together, we can forge a cohesive effort to prevent the spread of TB in Baltimore City.



Dr. Robert Koch was the first to discover the bacterium that causes tuberculosis. Dr. Koch's discovery opened the way toward diagnosing and curing tuberculosis.

### Remember:

- Latent TB infection means the germ is living in your body but it is not active and it is not making you sick. You cannot spread it to other people.
- Active TB disease means the TB germ is living in your body. It is active, and may be making you sick. You can spread it to other people.

## WHAT'S NEW

### TB prevention and control recommendations for homeless shelters

- Observe guests for signs of TB and refer individuals who are coughing for more than 3 weeks or who have other signs of TB to the TB Control Program for a medical evaluation. (Eastern Chest Clinic, 620 N Caroline St, Baltimore MD 21205 Contact person: Juanette Reece 410-396-9413 [juanette.reece@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:juanette.reece@baltimorecity.gov))
- Promote TB testing and

relay information that TB testing and treatment is free and that TB can be cured.

- Move guests who are coughing to a separate sleeping area if possible.
- Maintain as much space as possible between beds and position beds "head to toe" rather than "head to head".
- Think about ventilation: open doors and windows to promote air exchange, especially in areas where guests congregate to eat, sleep or watch TV.
- Contact the TB control program to request education

about TB for clients and staff.

- Post signs to promote "cough etiquette".
- Provide tissues and paper masks and use them for both staff and guests when they are coughing.

**Citation:** Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). *Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Recommendations for Homeless Shelters in Maine*. Augusta Maine.

### DID YOU KNOW:

The Baltimore City Health Department's TB control Program facilitates homeless service providers in making their facilities low risk for TB transmission. Please contact us for further information: Juanette Reece 410-396-9413, [juantte.reece@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:juantte.reece@baltimorecity.gov)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

**Q: If someone has a positive tuberculin skin test (TST) does that mean he/she has TB?**

A: No. A TST cannot completely determine if someone has active TB disease. A positive TST could mean that the individual only has latent TB infection. In this phase, the persons immune system is fighting the TB germ and keeping it from becoming active. Only about 10% of people with latent TB infection develop active TB disease. Although a positive TST does not necessary mean active TB disease, it does mean the person should come into the clinic for a medical evaluation.

**Q: How can I persuade a client to get a TST if he/she is unwilling to?**

A: Show concern for the clients overall health and provide information to educate the client on the importance of getting a TST.

## STAFF HIGHLIGHT

James Brooks is our volunteer staff member. James serves as a critical connection between the TB control program and Baltimore Rescue Mission (BRM), one of our designated shelters, by monitoring clients who cough consistently. This system of monitoring coughing clients is called the cough alert policy. Implementing the cough alert policy is a way of identifying persons who may be symptomatic for TB and is a really effective tool to protect the safety of shelter clients and staff. James observes clients who cough throughout the night or who has other TB symptoms and records their names in a cough log that we supplied. Individuals who's names have been listed for 2-3 weeks are referred to the TB control program for evaluation.

James finds his role in assisting with TB control at BRM very gratifying. He compares it to the ministry work that he also does, in that he is attending to the needs of others. According to



James, the presence of the TB control measures that have been put in place, such as the cough alert policy, educations, and environmental controls, are beneficial because it shows clients that others are concerned for their health and that makes them feel better.

## BALTIMORE CITY TB RATES

### 2007 TB Cases

- 47 cases, 7.4 per 100,000
- 27.7% Foreign-born
- 66% male
- 81% African American
- 30% Homeless within the past yr
- 21% HIV+

### 2008 TB Cases, year to date

- 23 cases
- 24% Foreign-born
- 43% male
- 81% African American
- 1 case homeless within the past yr
- 13% HIV+

### Outbreak Cases to Date = 38

- 32 identified homeless
  - 1 Health care worker
  - 1 Household contact,
  - 6 Not homeless/unknown exposure
- 84% (32) male
- 74% (28) pulmonary (lungs)
- 74% (28) sputum culture positive
- 50% (19) HIV +

\*33 of 38 Matching genotypes to date (MD002)

## RESOURCES

### Cough Alert Policy for Tuberculosis (TB)

Homeless Service Providers if you notice someone:

- ⇒ Coughing throughout the night, or
- ⇒ Cough persistent for more than 2-3 weeks without improvement, or
- ⇒ Coughing up blood

What to do:

- ◆ Ask client to cover their nose and mouth with tissue when coughing
- ◆ Record client information
- ◆ Refer the client to the health department

Baltimore City Health Department  
Tuberculosis Control Program  
Eastern Chest Clinic  
620 N. Caroline St  
Baltimore, MD 21205  
410-396-9413

## WORDS TO KNOW:

**Tuberculin Skin Test (TST)-** The standard method of determining whether a person is infected with *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis*.

**Sputum culture positive-** Confirms the diagnosis of TB.

**Medical Evaluation-** includes a review of medical history to examine risk factors for TB, sputum (phlegm) collection for the laboratory to determine if the TB bacteria is in the lungs, TST, and chest x-ray.

