

## Summary

The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is sending this health update to remind the health care community in Delaware to continue thinking, testing, and treating Tuberculosis (TB). This includes reporting all suspected and confirmed cases of TB disease to the Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (OIDE).

## Background

World TB Day is observed each year on March 24, the date Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. On World TB Day 2022, OIDE is sending this update on Delaware's progress toward the elimination of TB, with recommendations to consider when "thinking, testing, and treating TB." OIDE also thanks the health care community for its efforts.

## Summary

The incidence of TB disease in Delaware is declining. Incidence decreased from 2.0 cases of TB disease per 100,000 people in 2018 to 1.6 cases per 100,000 people in 2020. Incidence increased in 2021. The 2025 national target for the incidence of TB disease is 1.3 cases per 100,000 people.

## Recommendations

Anyone can get infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Quickly identifying suspected and confirmed cases of TB disease can stop the spread. Connecting people who have TB infection (TBI), also known as latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI), to treatment is the most effective way to prevent TB disease. Without treatment, 1 in 10 people with latent TB infection will get sick in the future. See below for recommendations to consider when "thinking, testing, and treating TB."

- **Signs and symptoms**
  - People who have COVID-19 infection may present with primary symptoms like those of TB disease. Primary symptoms of TB disease include productive cough, shortness of breath, fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, abnormal chest radiography, hemoptysis, fatigue, and weakness.
  - People who have TBI do not have any symptoms consistent with TB disease.
- **Exposure and transmission**

- Only people who have TB disease can spread *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. People who have TBI cannot spread *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and are not infectious.
- Like SARS-CoV-2, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* can spread when people with TB disease in their lungs speak, cough, or sing. The bacteria can stay in the air for several hours.
- Ask people about exposure to TB or risk factors, including health care-associated transmission.
- Encourage the use of airborne infection precautions in health care facilities.
- **Testing and screening**
  - Obtain specimens for diagnostic testing, while minimizing invasive procedures for suspected cases.
  - Screen all contacts of people with TB disease for TBI.
  - Interferon-Gamma Release Assays (IGRAs) can be used in place of, but not in addition to, tuberculin skin tests (TSTs) in all situations in which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends](#) TSTs as an aid in diagnosing *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection. IGRAs have many advantages over TSTs, including requiring only one patient visit and no false-positive results in people who received Bacille Calmette-Guérin vaccination.
- **Treatment**
  - Encourage people with TB disease and TBI to seek treatment.
  - [Shorter course drug regimens](#) exist for TBI. These regimens promote adherence to, and completion of, treatment.

## Reporting

TB disease is a reportable disease in Delaware. **Promptly report suspected (without waiting for laboratory confirmation) and confirmed cases of TB disease to OIDE.** Cases can be reported by phone (302-744-4990, normal business hours; 1-888-295-5156, outside of normal business hours), fax (302-622-4149), or email ([reportdisease@delaware.gov](mailto:reportdisease@delaware.gov)).

TBI is not a reportable disease in Delaware. However, OIDE encourages reporting to cases that meet the [current case definition](#).

## Additional Information/Resources

Eliminating TB requires the continuation and strengthening of connections between health care and public health. Contact OIDE with any questions about TBI or TB disease. You can reach OIDE during normal business hours at 302-744-4990.

OIDE can help connect you with the DPH-operated TB-specific clinics. There is one clinic in each county. The TB clinics provide comprehensive care for TBI and TB disease. This includes screening, diagnosis, and treatment. The services are available at little to no cost.

For more information about TB, visit the [CDC's website](#).