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Thermal: Public health officials confirm TB diagnosis

A patient seen at Borrego Health Centro Medico Coachella clinic in Thermal has been diagnosed with active tuberculosis (TB), and Riverside County public health officials are reaching out to patients and staff who may have been exposed to the illness to recommend they be tested.

"TB is very treatable once it's diagnosed. The risk of transmission in this case is low, but we want to ensure anyone who was potentially exposed is tested as a precaution," said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer.

Clinic patients who may have been exposed will be notified by letter advising that they should be screened for TB. Screening for TB includes a simple skin test. If the skin test reads positive, the individual will then require a chest x-ray and follow up with an appropriate provider.

“Borrego Health is ready and willing to provide the professional quality care that all people deserve in the Coachella Valley. Tuberculosis is a serious matter and we want the community to know that we are working closely with the Department of Public Health Disease Control branch to manage the situation,” said V. Manuel Perez, chief government and public affairs officer from Borrego Health.

Tuberculosis is a disease spread through the air during prolonged, repeated and close contact with an individual who is infected with active tuberculosis. When left untreated, TB can result in complications that can be serious. TB is not spread by shaking hands, sharing food or drink, or via bed linens or toilet seats.

Symptoms include a productive cough, unexplained weight loss, fever and feeling tired. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. A person with inactive (latent) TB cannot spread it to others.

“Testing is quick and virtually painless, and it provides good peace of mind,” Kaiser said.

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