

Better Breathing

A publication of
Breathe California
of the Bay Area

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What You Need to Know about TB

Sources: *Breathe California, Santa Clara County Public Health*

Last month Breathe California honored World TB Day. TB is a very serious lung disease and it is important for members of our community to know a little more about this disease.

Tuberculosis bacilli, or TB, is a disease caused by bacteria that can damage the lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness. It can affect people of all ages and all nationalities. In 2008, California's average TB cases was 7 per 100,000 people. There were a total of 197 TB cases in Santa Clara County alone.

An individual with active TB can spread the disease into the air by coughing, sneezing or shouting or even spitting on the sidewalk. People who breathe in these germs can be infected. We usually get it from people we spend most of our

time with like family, co-workers and friends.

TB can be detected through a skin test, where a doctor will inject small amounts of fluid under the skin on the arm. After two or three days the spot on the arm will be checked for any changes. Little or no change means that there are no TB germs in the body. If the spot becomes red or swollen, the person may have TB germs in their body, which a chest x-ray can confirm.

A TB infection means that the "inactive" TB germs are in your body. Your immune system traps these TB germs and builds a defense against them to keep from making you sick. A person can live a long time with TB germs in an inactive state, but without treatment, there is a life long risk of developing TB disease.

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Get your inhaler **FREE**
through Breathe
California!

See page 2 for details...



How to Get Your Inhaler for Free!

Breathe California is proud to announce that it will be offering vouchers for one free HFA inhaler!

The vouchers were donated by the Respiratory and Allergic Disease Foundation (in partnership with TEVA Specialty Pharmaceuticals) to help un-insured or under-insured patients switch over from the now-banned CFC inhalers.

You can download a short **voucher redemption form** from our Breathe California website at www.lungsrus.org. Bring your complete form along with a copy of your prescription to our office at 1469 Park Avenue in San Jose. Vouchers will be given out first-come, first-served while supplies last.

What You Need to Know...

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TB disease is caused by active TB germs. These germs can attack the lungs or other parts of the body. They can spread to the kidneys, the brain or the spine. If the body's defenses are weakened, a person with a TB infection can develop the TB disease. This may be due to aging, serious illness, drug or alcohol abuse or the HIV infection.

Symptoms of TB

Although TB can attack any part of the body, your lungs are the most common target. A person with TB disease can experience constant tiredness, fevers, weight loss, night sweats and a loss of appetite. Other symptoms include lots of coughing, a wet cough, a dry cough, chest pain

and spitting up blood. TB is a very serious disease and needs to be treated right away to avoid spreading it to other people. Without proper treatment, TB can lead to death.

Treatments

Thanks to modern medicine, TB is curable. A physician can prescribe medication by shots, pills or liquid to drink. If a patient stops treatment without permission, TB can return and be worse than before. It is important to continue taking medication until instructed to stop by your physician.

If you think you may have TB, see your doctor right away for a skin test. For more information about TB, skin tests or treatments please contact the Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Program at (408) 885-4214.

Boston Market Fundraising Night with Breathe California

Join Breathe California for dinner at Boston Market in San Jose! Help us raise some money and enjoy a delicious meal from Boston Market. 15% of all sales will be donated to Breathe California.

When: Tuesday, May 5th, 2009

Where: 1445 S. Bascom Avenue
San Jose, CA 95125

Call (408) 998-5865 for more details or to get an event ticket.



Time For Something Good.

In the News

Each month, we are proud to bring you some of the latest news affecting lung disease patients. You can also find more news briefs and articles online by visiting:

www.lungsrus.org

Click on the News link from the menu bar to reach our newsroom. From there, you can view individual articles by clicking on the "News Briefs" link.

From the Newsroom, you can also read about the agency's latest work in the community. Click on the "Agency News" link to view our latest articles and press releases.

The following news briefs have been summarized from external sources and have been placed here solely to inform you of the latest in lung health news. Breathe California does not endorse their findings nor have they verified their accuracy.

New State Tobacco Tax Proposed

San Jose Mercury News, March 10, 2009

California State Senator Alex Padilla has proposed a new \$1.50 increase to the state's tobacco tax in an effort to curb smoking and increase state revenues. The measure would bring the state's cigarette tax to \$2.37/pack, and raise approximately \$1.4 billion annually to supplement the state's general fund, support anti-smoking programs and fund lung cancer research.

In addition to raising revenue, tobacco taxes have been shown to help decrease youth smoking rates. California's current tax of \$0.87/pack is the 31st highest in the state and brings the average total cost of a pack to \$4-\$5. If passed, the increase would make California's tobacco tax the 5th highest in the country. Padilla's proposal would also raise taxes

on other tobacco products and ban tobacco sales within 1,000 feet of schools and "other settings where children are commonly present without adult supervision."

While the measure gained the support of many health advocates and organizations, past tobacco tax measures have often run into stiff opposition in the past. In 2006, a ballot proposition was narrowly defeated which would have raised the per-pack-tax to \$2.60. The measure also required a 2/3 majority in both houses of the state legislature, and Governor Schwarzenegger has not indicated he would support other tax increases given the current economy.

Santa Clara County Unveils New TB Blood Test

Source: TB Prevention Partnership, 3/23/09

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department unveiled a new diagnostic blood test that will help the county better screen for latent tuberculosis (TB). The Quantiferon Gold blood test is more effective and efficient than the standard Tuberculin Skin Test because it requires just a single patient visit, produces quicker results and reduces false positive rates. The new test is also not affected by prior BCG vaccinations, commonly given in other countries.

The announcement came as the Public Health Department joined Breathe California and other community partners in commemorating World TB Day. In addition to a short press conference, the new test was showcased at a workplace screening for Public Health Department staff.

"It is critical to identify and treat

individuals with latent TB before they develop symptoms and spread the disease to others," said Dr. Julie Higashi, TB Controller, Santa Clara County Public Health Department. "This new test will make screening for TB more efficient and effective because we will be able to quickly identify high-risk individuals for follow-up and treatment. Because this new test reduces the number of false positives, we will be able to better focus our limited resources."

County officials also released the latest TB stats, which showed a slight decrease in cases between 2007 and 2008. Nonetheless, the county's active TB rate of 10.9 (per 100,000) continued to outpace rates for the state and country (7.0 and 4.2, respectively). In addition, Santa Clara County also had more TB cases than 35 other states.

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is a publication of:

**Breathe California
of the Bay Area**
1469 Park Avenue
San Jose, CA 95126
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*As the local clean air
and lung health leader,
Breathe California of the
Bay Area fights lung
disease in all its forms
and works with its
communities to promote
lung health.*

Upcoming Better Breathers Club Meetings

Monday, April 13th, 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm – Palo Alto
Avenidas Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street

Speaker: Judy Lu & Antonio Nunez, Program Coordinators, The Health Trust
“The Health Trust Chronic Disease Management Program”

Monday, April 27th, 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm – San Jose
Breathe California Offices, 1469 Park Avenue

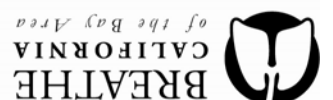
Speaker: Judy Lu & Antonio Nunez, Program Coordinators, The Health Trust
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A Look Ahead: Our May BBC Meetings

South County – Tuesday, May 12th, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm
Palo Alto – Monday, May 11th, 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm
San Jose – Monday, May 18th, 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

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