



Sherlita Amler, MD, MS, FAAP  
**Commissioner of Health**

Robert J. Bondi  
**Putnam County Executive**

Loretta Molinari, RN, MSN  
**Associate Commissioner of Health**

Robert Morris, PE  
**Director of Environmental Health**

Putnam County Department of Health, 1 Geneva Road, Brewster, N.Y 10509

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: Tuesday, March 23, 2010**

**Contact: Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health, Putnam County  
Department of Health, 845-278-6558**

### **March 24 is World TB Day**

Brewster – World TB Day is observed on March 24, the day in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of the bacteria which causes tuberculosis. World TB Day provides an opportunity to raise public awareness of this global disease.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease spread through the air when a person with untreated active pulmonary TB disease coughs, sings or speaks. Prolonged exposure to a person with untreated active tuberculosis disease is usually required for infection to occur. TB can affect anyone of any age, though people with weakened immune systems are at increased risk.

Tuberculosis usually affects the lungs, though other parts of the body may be affected. The symptoms of tuberculosis include a prolonged cough, coughing up blood, night sweats, fever, significant weight loss, and fatigue. Some individuals may not have obvious symptoms.

Approximately 1,300 cases of TB are reported each year in New York State.

Persons with active TB disease usually have symptoms and are capable of spreading the disease to others. An individual with TB disease may remain contagious until they have been on appropriate treatment. Treatment involves taking antituberculosis medication specifically

prescribed by a physician. In addition to spreading the disease to others, an untreated person may become severely ill or die.

Some persons who breathe in air containing TB germs acquire *latent TB infection*. *Latent TB infection* means that a person is infected with the TB germ but because the germ is in the dormant stage they are not contagious to others. A person who has *latent TB infection* is not sick, and won't spread TB because the germs are not yet active. However, active TB disease can develop from a *latent TB infection* months or even years in the future. For this reason, a person with *latent TB infection* may be prescribed treatment to prevent active disease from developing.

There are two tests which can be used to detect TB infection: a skin test and a special blood test. A person who receives the tuberculin skin test, or Mantoux skin test, must return within 48 -72 hours to have a trained professional evaluate the site. The blood test would measure how the person's immune system reacts to the germs that cause TB. If you know you have been around someone with TB disease, you should call your doctor or the Putnam County Health Department and arrange to be tested.

The most important way to stop the spread of TB is for infected patients to cover their mouth when they cough, and to take all TB medicine exactly as prescribed by the physician. For more information about tuberculosis, call the Putnam County Department of Health at 845-278-6558 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at: [www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/tuberculosis/fact\\_sheet.htm](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/tuberculosis/fact_sheet.htm) .

