



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Hawaii Department of Health conducts TB testing  
At Lihikai Elementary School on Maui**

HONOLULU -- The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is notifying the parents of students and staff members of Lihikai Elementary School on Maui of possible exposure to tuberculosis (TB) at the school. An informational session for affected families and employees will be held next week. Precautionary TB testing will be offered to roughly 80 individuals who may have had exposure.

“The risk of catching TB from someone at school is very low,” said Dr. Elizabeth MacNeill, chief of the DOH Tuberculosis Branch. “TB is not as contagious as many other illnesses such as colds or the flu. Testing may help us find others with early, noncontagious TB and gives us the opportunity to prevent TB for those who might have been exposed. The school screening is an extra measure of safety, and everyone who may have been exposed is being notified.”

DOH conducted an extensive investigation and evaluation of potential contacts and possible exposure immediately after being notified of the active TB case at the end of October. Information on the individual and their case is confidential and protected by law. DOH will be testing only those persons with regular close contact to the patient, and all student families and school employees are receiving a letter describing the situation and whether testing is recommended.

Informational meetings will be held in the cafeteria at Lihikai Elementary School to give families and employees the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their concerns. Meetings will be

held on Tuesday, Nov. 21 at 2:30 p.m. for school employees, and at 6 p.m. for families and the general public. TB screening at the school is scheduled to begin on Monday, Nov. 27.

TB is a disease that is commonly seen in the lungs and can be spread from person-to-person through the air with close, continuous contact. When a person with active TB disease in the lung or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, tiny drops containing *M. tuberculosis* may be spread into the air. If another person inhales these drops, there is a chance that they may become infected with TB. Two forms of TB exist, both of which are treatable and curable:

1. Latent TB infection – when a person has TB bacteria in their body but the body's immune system is protecting them and they are not sick. Someone with latent TB infection cannot spread the infection to other people.
2. Active TB disease – when a person becomes sick with TB because their immune system can no longer protect them from active TB infection. Someone with active TB disease may be able to spread the infection to other people.

For more information on tuberculosis or TB testing, please call the DOH Hawaii Tuberculosis Control Program at 832-5731 or visit <http://health.hawaii.gov/tb/>.

The Tuberculosis Control Program works to reduce the incidence of TB in the state by providing effective prevention, detection, treatment, and educational services. The program offers diagnosis and treatment of TB; ensures that all cases and suspected cases of TB are identified and appropriate therapy is provided; and provides preventive therapy for patients at high risk of developing TB disease including contacts of active cases, persons who are HIV positive, and those with evidence of untreated TB. Through its clinics located in four counties, the program conducts direct TB services including chest X-ray, sputum smear and culture for mycobacteria, tuberculin skin testing, treatment with anti-tuberculosis therapy, and directly observed therapy.

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