



Flathead City-County Health Department

1035 First Ave. West Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 751-8101 FAX 751-8102

www.flatheadhealth.org

Community Health Services
751-8110 FAX 751-8111
Environmental Health Services
751-8130 FAX 751-8131
Family Planning Services
751-8150 FAX 751-8151
Home Health Services
751-6800 FAX 751-6807
WIC Services
751-8170 FAX 751-8171
Animal Shelter
752-1310 FAX 752-1546

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One Case of Active Tuberculosis Identified

A student at Flathead High School has been diagnosed with an active case of tuberculosis (TB). School District 5 officials along with staff from the Flathead City-County Health Department are working closely with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and Kalispell Regional Medical Center to manage the care of the student. The student is complying with isolation precautions and is receiving medication to treat the illness.

The Health Department and School District 5 have notified all parents of identified contacts (those that were in close proximity in a shared space with the student) utilizing phone and email. If you have not been contacted, your student was not identified as a close contact and does not require screening. Contacts will be screened for TB utilizing a skin test. The first test will be conducted immediately and the second one will be conducted 8-10 weeks after the first test, approximately late May.

"Tuberculosis is a disease that can be treated and prevented," said Hillary Hanson, Flathead County Health Officer. "Identifying and screening contacts is an essential intervention, as is ensuring treatment of the ill individual. We have both these interventions in place to prevent the spread."

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. TB is spread through the air by coughing, laughing, singing and sneezing. The only way to contract the disease is by close contact (several hours a day) with someone who has the disease. It cannot be spread by contact with someone's clothing, drinking glass, eating utensils, handshake, toilet or other surfaces. Symptoms of TB can include a cough of longer than three weeks, unexplained weight loss, night sweats, chills, fever and coughing up blood. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection (LTBI) and active TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

TB disease is typically treated for six to nine months with antibiotics. A person with TB will become non-contagious within a few days to weeks of effective treatment and will be able to return to normal activities without risk to others while completing treatment.

