

Students at Henrico School Possibly Exposed to Tuberculosis

HENRICO, VA (WWBT) -

The Health Department says nearly 200 students at a Henrico high school may have been exposed to tuberculosis.

A letter from the department went out to parents of 189 students at Douglas Freeman High School.

There will be a TB screening at the school on May 1.

"Please check with the School Nurse on Thursday or Friday this week to find out your assigned time," said the letter to parents.

Even if students haven't shown symptoms yet, doctors say TB can sit dormant for longer than you might realize.

"Doesn't tend to hit acutely, like we think about with other pneumonias, it can kind of work its way up slowly to more severe symptoms. So sometimes when we see it, people have been sick for awhile and just not known it," said Dr. Melissa Aquillo with Patient First.

That's why the health department and the school are acting quickly. Students will be assigned a time to get screened on Monday. The screen is a skin test.

"If it's negative, we're pretty certain that they have not been exposed to tuberculosis," said Dr. Aquillo. "If it's positive, the next step would be to do a chest x-ray to see if there are signs of pneumonia."

While 189 potential exposures might sound like a lot, Dr. Aquillo says she doesn't expect many positive cases, if any, to come from this.

"Don't panic...if the Health Department has recommended that you get your child tested, do have the testing done."

Here are the details of the TB Screening and Testing Process listed in the letter:

- The Henrico Health Department will conduct all screening and testing and the delivery of test results at DSF.
- Please bring the attached Contact Registration form. Please fill out the Client Section on the top of the form and have a parent or guardian sign if the person being screened is under 18 years old.
- Screening and testing will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes.
- You will receive a brief interview about possible TB symptoms and your overall health status.
- You will be offered a TB skin test or blood test. If you get the skin test, you will need to have it read on Wednesday (May 3). We will know the blood test results by May 4 at the latest.

- If the skin test or blood test is positive, you will be sent for a chest x-ray.
- Based on the results of the chest-ray, certain antibiotics will be recommended.
- If the skin test or blood test is negative, you may need to have a second test during the summer. More information will be given to you closer to that time.
- There is no charge to you for the TB skin test, blood test, or chest x-ray if they are done through the Henrico Health Department, but please bring a front and back copy of your health insurance card to the screening. If you have health insurance and choose to have the blood test done, your insurance may be billed for the cost. However, if you have a high deductible or if your insurance does not cover the test for any reason, you will not have to pay.

The Health Department says they will have an informational meeting for the community on Wednesday at 6 p.m. in the school gym.