



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

PALOMAR  
POMERADO  
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SPECIALIZING IN YOU

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

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## **MOTHER OF INFANT IN HOSPITAL NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT HAD LESS INFECTIOUS FORM OF TUBERCULOSIS**

*Families, Staff Who Were in Close Contact with Patient are Being Notified, Tested*

The San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), working in collaboration with Palomar Pomerado Health, is notifying and testing approximately 25 families who visited the Palomar Medical Center Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) between March 10 and April 5, after a woman who gave birth there was diagnosed with a less infectious form of tuberculosis (TB). At this point based on preliminary tests, there is no evidence of TB in her lung secretions. The woman's baby is being treated for TB.

The possible exposure took place between March 10 and April 5, in the NICU, which is an isolated area of the hospital. Visitors and staff who were there for eight-hour periods during this time may have been exposed. Hospital officials have identified visitors and hospital staff who may have had contact with the patient.

"There is a minimal chance anyone in the NICU may have become infected by this patient. However, we are not taking any chances, and will aggressively notify our visitors and staff, casting a wide net to ensure everyone is aware of the situation," says Nabil Fatayeriji, M.D., Neonatologist for Palomar Medical Center. "Our goal is to have a dialogue with every individual who may have been potentially exposed."

The mother and baby are being treated and neither is infectious at this time. Approximately 150 medical staff have been notified and some will be screened for TB. More than half of the 25 families in the NICU between March 10 and April 5 have already been alerted to the situation.

"We are working with the hospital, which is notifying the families of other infants in the NICU, and hospital staff, that may have been exposed," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., Interim San Diego County Public Health Officer. "It is unlikely that any of the other infants, or visitors, will contract TB."

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Anyone who was in the NICU between March 10 and April 5 may call Palomar Medical Center at (760) 739-3430. Individuals with no medical provider may call the County TB Program at (619) 692-8621.

Most people who are exposed to TB do not develop the disease. Tuberculosis is not uncommon in the San Diego region. During 2006, there were 315 total cases of TB in San Diego County.

## TUBERCULOSIS TRANSMISSION

TB is spread by droplets released into the air when a person with active disease coughs, sneezes, talks, etc. Susceptible individuals who share the same air may become infected if these droplets are inhaled into the lung. Once these droplets settle onto a surface they pose a risk for infection. Prolonged close contact with someone who has active TB is generally required to transmit the disease. Those who may have had incidental contact with someone who has active TB are at extremely minimal risk for acquiring the infection.

## TUBERCULOSIS INFECTION

Once infected with TB, most individuals fight off the disease. Only 10% of those infected with TB develop TB. People with other medical problems are more susceptible to the disease. There are no signs or symptoms of TB infection. Infection is best detected by the skin test. It may take 8 to 10 weeks for the skin test to turn positive after an individual is infected. Thus, this screening should be repeated again in 8 to 10 weeks. An individual infected with TB cannot spread the TB organism to others. A person must have active TB in order to infect others.

## SYMPTOMS OF TUBERCULOSIS

Fatigue  
Sweating  
Malaise  
Unexplained weight loss  
Persistent cough  
Shortness of breath  
Fever

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