



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

---

## On World TB Day, nation's TB rate is lowest ever recorded

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Pam Barrett  
(334) 206-6228

World TB Day, held on March 24 each year, is an occasion for people around the world to raise awareness about the international health threat presented by tuberculosis (TB). It is a day to recognize the collaborative efforts of all countries involved in fighting TB. TB can be cured, controlled, and, with diligent efforts and sufficient resources, eventually eliminated.

The discovery of the TB bacillus was announced in Berlin on March 24, 1882, by Dr. Robert Koch. His discovery was the most important step taken toward the control and elimination of the deadly disease that was killing one out of seven people living in the United States and Europe during the 19th century. In 1982, the first World TB Day was sponsored by the World Health Organization and the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease.

"Many people believe that tuberculosis is a disease of the past, but this is not the case," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "Today in the 21st century, TB is still one of the leading global causes of death from infectious disease, even though it is readily treatable and preventable."

More than one-third of the global population is infected with the tuberculosis bacterium, and TB disease remains one of the world's leading causes of disease and death. In 2005, a total of 14,093 TB cases were reported in the United States. The overall TB case rate – 4.8 per 100,000 persons – was the lowest rate ever recorded since reporting began in 1953. Alabama reported a total of 216 cases of TB disease in 2005, up only slightly from 211 in 2004.

TB is an airborne disease that can affect the lungs as well as other organs. People who are infected with TB do not always feel sick, have symptoms, or spread the germ unless their infection develops into active TB disease. However, left untreated, each person with active TB can infect, on average, 10 to 15 people every year.

"A simple skin test will show if an individual has come into contact with the tuberculosis bacteria," explained Pam Barrett, training coordinator and prison liaison for the Division of TB Control at the Alabama Department of Public Health. "If the test is positive, further tests can be performed to determine whether exposure has developed into active TB disease."

People who should receive a TB skin test include the following:

- anyone who has been in contact with someone sick with active tuberculosis,
- residents and employees of nursing homes, homeless shelters, prisons or migrant farm camps
- anyone having HIV infection, or
- anyone who injects drugs and/or shares needles.

TB must be treated immediately with the proper medications and for the correct period of time. If not treated properly, the TB germ may become resistant to the medicine and become more dangerous and difficult to kill.

For more information on tuberculosis, please call the Division of TB Control at the Alabama Department of Public Health, 334-206-5330, or visit [www.adph.org/tb](http://www.adph.org/tb).

3/24/06