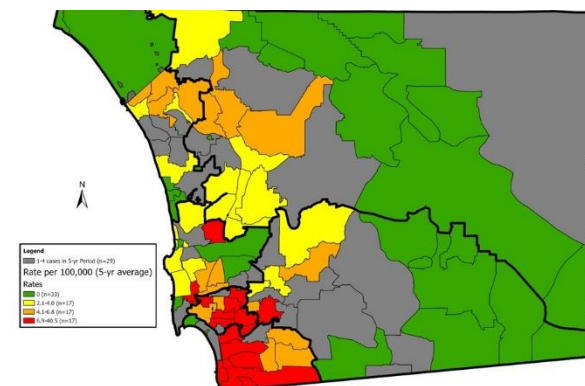# Tuberculosis Elimination in San Diego County

The Human Toll of Active TB Disease

- TB is the leading cause of death among infectious diseases globally. 1 in 4 people on the planet have active TB.
- **Active TB usually affects the lungs and spreads through the air when a person sick with TB speaks or coughs**. Another type of TB spreads through ingestion of unpasteurized dairy.
- **1 in 6 people with active TB in CA die within 5 years of diagnosis and 14% do not survive treatment.**
- Children under age five are at the highest risk of severe complications that can lead to lifelong disability.
- In 2024, San Diego County reported 247 new active TB diagnoses, a rate of 7.5 new cases per 100,000 persons - **the fourth consecutive year of rising TB cases since 2021**.
- The highest rates and numbers of active TB diagnoses are in the South and Central Regions of the County (Figure 1).
- TB leads to isolation from family and friends while contagious; exclusion from the workplace can result in lost wages, employment loss, risk for poverty, and homelessness.

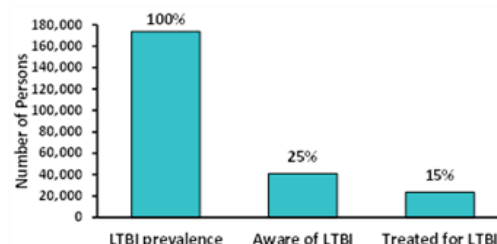**Figure 1. Active TB incidence by zip code, San Diego County, 2019-2023**

Tuberculosis Rates by Zip Code, San Diego County, 2019-2023
Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Tuberculosis Control, RVCT Database
Map Date: December 3, 2024

Treatment of Latent TB Infection Prevents Active TB

- **Latent TB infection (LTBI)** occurs when people who have been infected with TB bacteria do not become sick with active TB right away, but instead harbor the TB germs in their body.
  - **People living with LTBI can become sick with active TB at any time in the future if not treated**.
  - The BCG vaccine does not prevent active TB.
- **About 175,000 San Diegans are living with LTBI.** Only 25% are aware of their infection and only 15% have been treated (Figure 2).
- **TB risk assessment, TB testing, and LTBI treatment** will prevent many people in San Diego County from getting sick with active TB.
- **Prevention is far less costly than TB treatment.** The cost to prevent TB for one person is low ($857) compared with costs of diagnosing and treating a person with active TB disease ($43,900).

Figure 2. Approximate estimates of LTBI prevalence, awareness and treatment, San Diego County

Estimated using methodology from the California TB Control Branch [Report on Tuberculosis in California, 2021](#) and Data Tables, 2017-2021, applying national level data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011-2012, to the San Diego County population.
Source: County of San Diego, www.cdph.ca.gov

Recommendations for TB Screening and LTBI Treatment

- **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force** recommends testing asymptomatic adults at risk for TB and treating LTBI ([Recommendation: Latent Tuberculosis Infection: Screening | United States Preventive Services Taskforce (uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org)](#).
- **New CA TB Screening Legislation** (AB 2132) effective January 1, 2025, requires adults receiving primary care be offered a TB risk assessment, TB testing if they are at risk, and follow-up LTBI care if they test positive. [AB 2132](#)
- **San Diego County TB risk assessment tools** are available for providers and community: ([Tuberculosis Control and Refugee Health Program (sandiegocounty.gov)](#).
- **TB blood tests to diagnose LTBI** are more specific than the traditional TB skin test and result in fewer false positives, including from the BCG vaccine.
- **CDC recommends LTBI short-course treatment regimens** (such as rifampin daily for 4 months or rifapentine plus isoniazid weekly for 12 weeks) that are better tolerated by patients and have higher rates of treatment completion.

> **85% of active TB cases began as latent TB infection (LTBI) and could have been prevented.**
>
> - California Department of Public Health

San Diego County TB Elimination Initiative

The San Diego County TB Elimination Initiative (TBEI) is a public-private partnership approved by the County Board of Supervisors that creates a coordinated TB elimination framework serving San Diego County's diverse population. The partnership convenes stakeholders from over 25 organizations to focus on effective TB prevention, including TB risk assessment, testing, and treatment of people with latent TB infection (LTBI) to prevent progression of latent infection to active TB disease. Ongoing TBEI work consists of collaboration among provider organizations and community partners to plan and implement TB prevention strategies that provide the foundation for diagnosing and treating LTBI cases, furthering TB elimination goals and objectives in San Diego County.

TBEI partner organizations collaborate on TB elimination activities across the following areas:

Community of Practice (CoP)

- **GOALS:** Educate providers about LTBI care best practices and electronic health record enhancements that support LTBI quality improvement; encourage the development and use of a LTBI care cascade by healthcare organizations in the County; enhance capacity for LTBI care cascade measurement.
- **PARTNERS:** The TBEI Community of Practice convenes primary care, infectious disease, and pulmonary medicine providers, epidemiologists, quality leads from community clinics, health systems, health plans, universities, and State and local health departments.
- **AWARDS:** The TBEI CoP was recognized as a CDC U.S. TB Elimination Champion in 2024.

TB Prevention in Schools

- **GOALS:** Enhance TB education and screening in San Diego County schools to prevent TB transmission on school campuses.
- **PARTNERS:** The TB prevention work in schools engages partners from K-12 and higher education institutions in implementing TB prevention strategies that include TB peer education programs, as well as events that promote education and access to TB risk assessment, testing and LTBI linkage to care.

Community Outreach and Education

- **GOALS:** Promote TB prevention through community outreach events and activities that educate about TB, promote awareness that TB is preventable through treatment of LTBI, and improve access to TB screening, testing, chest x-rays, LTBI clinical evaluation and treatment for high-risk populations.
- **PARTNERS:** The TBEI convenes stakeholders from organizations that serve communities that are at high risk for TB.