

6.10 Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a mycobacterial disease that is spread from person to person through the air. Tuberculosis usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get treatment.

Tuberculosis germs are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. These germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. Persons who breathe in the air containing these TB germs can become infected.

People with TB disease are sick from TB germs that are active, meaning that they are multiplying and destroying tissue in their body. They usually have symptoms of TB disease. People with TB disease of the lungs or throat are capable of spreading germs to others. They are prescribed drugs that can cure TB disease. People with *latent TB infection* have TB germs in their bodies, but they are not sick because the germs are not active. These people do not have symptoms of TB disease, and they cannot spread the germs to others. However, they may develop TB disease in the future. They are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing TB disease.

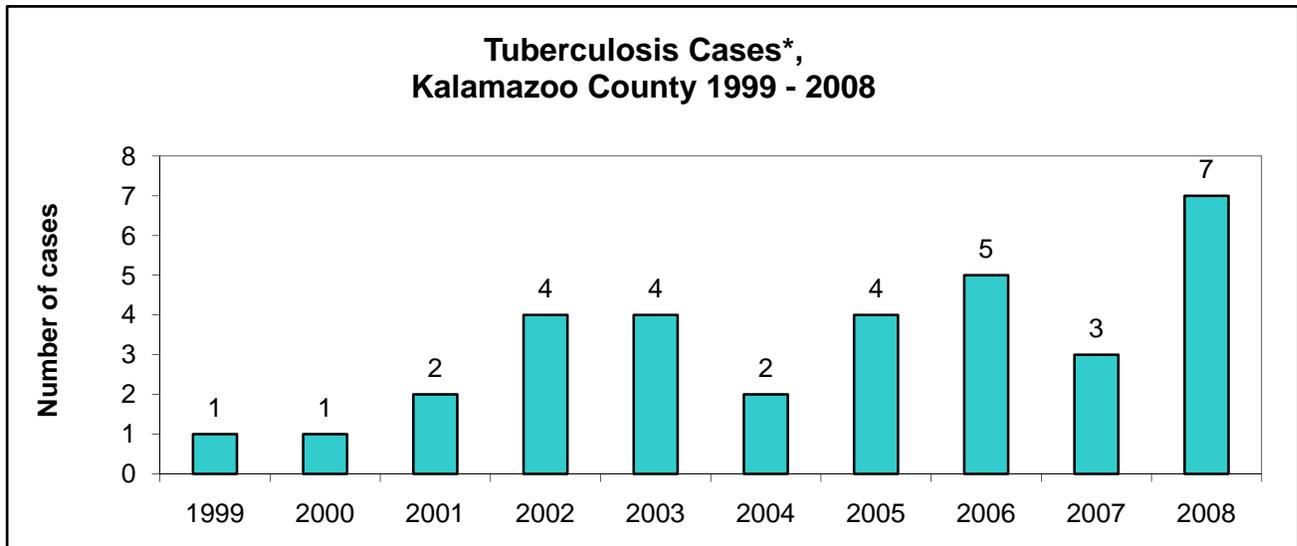
The general symptoms of TB disease include feelings of sickness or weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats. The symptoms of TB disease of the lungs also include coughing, chest pain, and the coughing up of blood. Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected.¹

The risk of becoming infected after exposure to someone with active TB disease depends on the degree of exposure (the more time spent with a person with active TB and the closer the contact, the greater the risk of infection). Risk of developing disease after becoming infected is greatest among those with HIV or other forms of immunosuppression, those who are underweight or undernourished, persons with a debilitating disorder (such as chronic renal failure, some cancers, silicosis, diabetes, or gastrectomy), and substance abusers.²

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fact Sheet about TB, accessed online at www.michigan.gov/tb on 6/20/07.

² Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 18th edition. DL Heymann, editor.

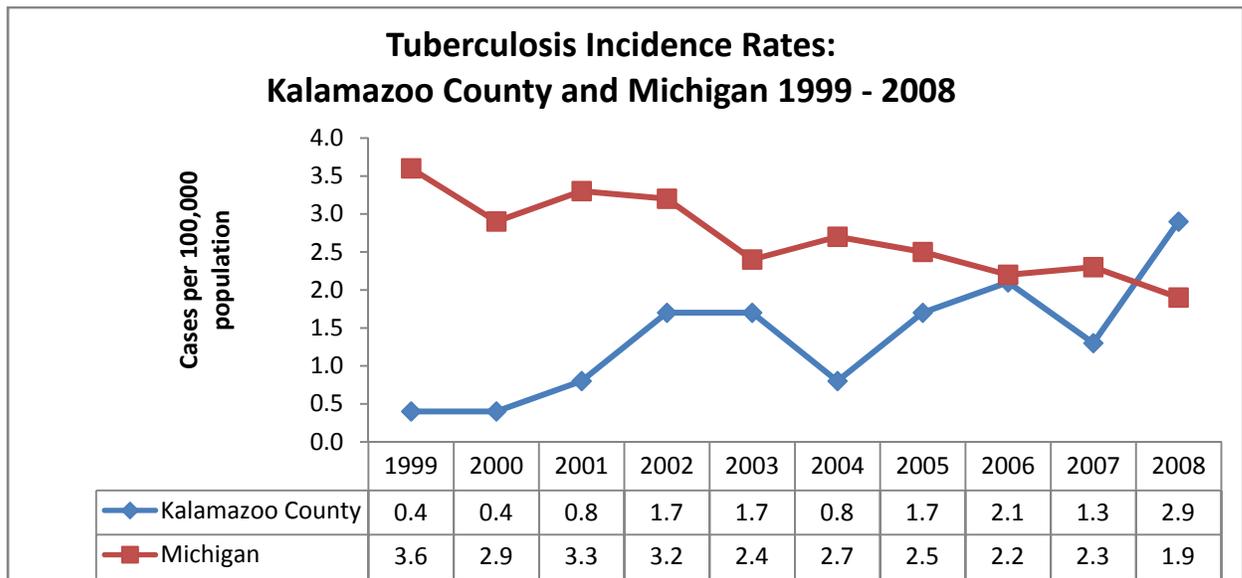
The number of incident cases per year in Kalamazoo County appears to be climbing in recent years. An average of 4.2 new cases were diagnosed in Kalamazoo County per year between 2004 and 2008, compared with an average of 2.4 per year between 1999 and 2003.



*Includes only new cases diagnosed in the respective year. Cases who moved into Kalamazoo County but were diagnosed while a resident elsewhere are not included in these numbers.

Michigan Department of Community Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, Communicable Disease Division

While county rates have slightly increased from 1999 to 2008, the rate of TB infection in Michigan has steadily declined over this ten-year period. In 2008, the Kalamazoo County rate was slightly higher than the rate in Michigan.



*Includes only new cases diagnosed in the respective year. New cases are included in the counts for the area where the patient was a resident at the time of diagnosis.

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