Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious infection that can go on for years if not treated. It usually attacks the lungs, but almost any part of the body can be affected. TB germs (*bacteria*) are easily spread from one person to another through the air. The germs are put into the air when a person with TB coughs or sneezes. You or your child probably caught TB by breathing TB germs into the lungs. This illness generally is not passed to others from clothes, drinking glasses, dishes, handshaking or using the same toilet. TB can be cured with medications. You or your child will have to take the medicines for a long time, often a year or longer. If TB is not treated completely, it can damage the lungs and other parts of the body and may result in death.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Caregivers are required by law to report all cases of TB to the health department. This helps protect others from getting TB. It also helps individuals get the needed care to cure TB. TREATMENT MUST CONTINUE AS DIRECTED, EVEN IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD NO LONGER FEEL SICK. The health department requires, insists and enforces this.
- IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE MEDICINE IS TAKEN EXACTLY AS DIRECTED BY THE CAREGIVER. If medicines are skipped or stopped, the infection may not be cured. Bacteria can also become resistant. Remember, you will always have this infection unless treated with correct medications.
- Some suggestions to help with remembering to take the medicine include:
  - Asking someone else, such as a family member or a friend, to help keep track of taking the medicine.
  - Taking the medicine at the same time every day.
  - Marking a calendar every time the medicine is taken.
  - Putting the medicine out at night, for the next day.
  - Keeping the medicine in a place where the medicine cannot be missed.
  - Using medication arrangers, which can be purchased at a pharmacy.
- Regular follow-up is required to ensure medications are working. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP ALL APPOINTMENTS. Be sure to tell the caregiver if something is wrong. The follow-up may include:
  - Weight and temperature measurements and a lung exam.
  - Chest X-rays to determine the effectiveness of the medications.
  - Sputum *(mucus)* samples to determine if TB bacteria are present and if the medications are working.
- Until the caregiver says you or your child cannot spread your illness to others *(not contagious)*:
  - Stay at home. Avoid close contact with others, especially babies and elderly people. They are much more susceptible to this illness.
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of used tissues properly. Masks are not needed.
  - Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
  - Do not go back to work or school until the caretaker gives permission. Later, you may work at your same job. If your boss is worried about your illness and your return to work, your caregiver can help eliminate those fears.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Rest as needed.
- Family members, close friends and co-workers should have a TB skin test. They could have caught this illness without getting sick. They may need to take medicine to prevent them from getting TB. People only seen occasionally, probably do not need a TB skin test.
- After treatment is finished, regular follow-ups will be needed for at least 2 years to make sure the illness remains in control.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child has new problems *(symptoms)* that may be caused by the medicine.
- Symptoms do not go away or get worse despite taking medications.
- Anyone who spent time near you develops symptoms of TB, such as fever, loss of appetite, weight loss,

night sweats or cough. They will need to get tested for TB.

- You or your child has a cough that does not clear up after 3 or 4 weeks following a cold.
- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 100.5º F (38.1° C) or higher for more than 1 day.
- You or your child has continued weight loss despite adequate food intake.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child has chest pain or cough up blood.
- You or your child has difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- You or your child has a headache, vomiting or neck stiffness.
- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**

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